The Muslim Sunrise

Winter • 2006
$4.00

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)



The concept of the soul is vital to faith in a Living God. If God does not create the soul, then the divinity of God comes under question. If the soul can start and live on its own, then what is the function of God?

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 178 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad[as] (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad[as] proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (98:6).The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur'anic teaching: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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The Muslim Sunrise is published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Phone 301.879.0110, Fax 301.879.0115, under the auspices of Dr. Ahsanullah Zafar, Ameer and National President. The views and opinions expressed by individual contributers in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the editor, questions and submissions. Email: MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us.

Library of Congress Call Number BP195.A5 M8

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *Alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad *Sallallaho alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *Radhi-Allaho anho* or 'may Allah be pleased with him." While such salutations have been abbreviated in the text for readability (as, sa & ra respectively), we encourage all Muslims to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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The Muslim Sunrise

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The first Ahmadiyya Muslim Missionary to arrive in America was Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957). He has the honor and distinction of founding the Muslim Sunrise. It is the oldest Muslim publication in America.The Muslim Sunrise was founded in 1921. The Muslim Sunrise is a journal of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, U.S.A. The magazine is open for discussions on Islam and topics relating to other religions. It highlights the role of Islam in a changing environment. It provides a platform for public opinion on current issues and their solutions.



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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

وَيَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ؕ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ وَمَآ
اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلاً 0

And they ask thee concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge *thereof* you have been given but little.'

يٰٓاَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ 0 ارْجِعِيْٓ اِلٰى رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً 0
فَادْخُلِيْ فِيْ عِبَادِيْ 0 وَادْخُلِيْ جَنَّتِيْ 0

And thou, O soul at peace! Return to thy Lord well pleased with him and He will be pleased *with thee*. So enter thou among My chosen servants. And enter thou My Garden. (89:28-31)

وَنَفْسٍ وَّمَا سَوّٰىهَا 0 فَاَلْهَمَهَا فُجُوْرَهَا وَتَقْوٰىهَا 0 قَدْ اَفْلَحَ مَنْ
زَكّٰهَا 0 وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسّٰىهَا 0

And by the soul and its perfection – And He revealed to it what is wrong for it and what is right for it – He indeed truly prospers who purifies it. And he who corrupts it is ruined. (91:8-11)

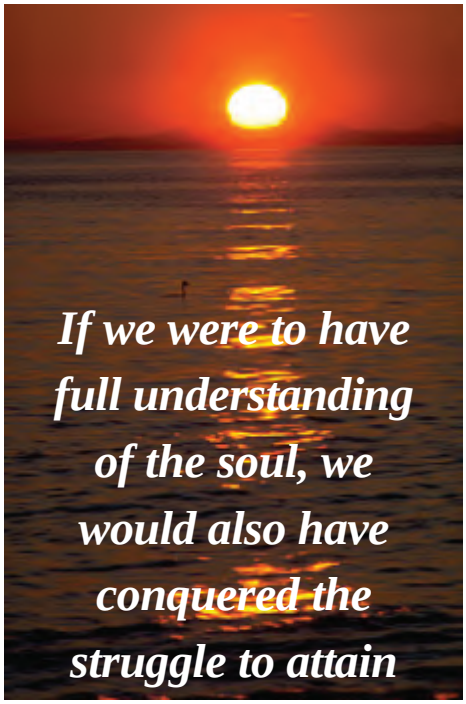
Editorial

The subject of the soul has long been of great interest and curiosity, resulting in discussion and debate among people of all faiths.

The concept of the soul is vital to faith in a Living God. If God does not create the soul, then the divinity of God comes under question. If the soul can start and live on its own, then what is the function of God? If, in fact, the soul is self-existent, then its independence refutes the existence of Divine attributes.

Our logic, rationality and knowledge are very limited when it comes to the matter of the soul. Relying merely on our power of reasoning, we could hardly explain even the very rudimentary questions concerning the soul. Even in simpler forms of life, how does the soul enter inside an egg? There is no obvious opening in the shell of an egg. Furthermore, if the yet to be born baby inside the egg dies before coming out of the shell, how does the soul get out of the egg and where does it go? Our reasoning fails us on an even greater scale when we discuss the soul of a human being, the superior soul.

In religious scriptures, including the Holy Qur'an, we have been provided with very little information on the subject of the soul. The Holy Qur'an specifically makes reference to this by stating that the knowledge of the soul is with God and we have been given very little of it. Basically our knowledge is confined to the birth of the soul, the way we observe insects coming into being from some matter. We have similarly been given knowledge that human souls are created from sperm-drops, and so on. Knowledge of the soul relates directly to life in the hereafter.



If we were to have full understanding of the soul, we would also have conquered the struggle to attain knowledge of the hereafter. No mystery would be left regarding the next life, its existence, its majesty and the union of some chosen souls with God.

If we *were* to have full understanding of the soul, we would also have conquered the struggle to attain knowledge of the hereafter. No mystery would be left regarding the next life, its existence, its majesty and the union of some chosen souls with God. That information has been kept from us because having its knowledge would make the choice between good and evil in this world a useless concept. The rewards for the struggle in our faith in God's word are only meaningful when we don't have complete knowledge of the hereafter.

The soul is a subject that requires God's help and assistance. Prophets of God were given certain information about the soul so that we would believe in its existence. We have been told in the Holy Qur'an, for instance, that our experience of sleeping and dreaming should reflect some answers to the mysteries of how the soul realizes a temporary death during sleep, when it becomes cut off from its surroundings. This gives us some idea about what the death of the soul could eventually be like. Just as we have no control over our faculties during sleep, the soul, after death, would be completely and totally in the control of God and the only souls that would survive would be the ones that worked to have union with God.

One aspect of the soul that is very meaningful for us is that God Himself has inspired in it a yearning for His existence. Every soul wants to search for the higher being, the Divine, its Creator, and that is the basis of our religious beliefs. It is this desire that inspires us not only to look for God but to recognize Him and then struggle for an eventual union with Him.

In this issue, you will find various aspects of the soul including its existence and its concept according to Islam and some other faiths. Hopefully, it will enhance the understanding of our readers on this subject. Our discussion and debate should not be a mere academic exercise but another avenue and means to gain a better understanding of the existence of God and His works. We hope that the articles in this issue will serve that purpose. ◆

The Promised Messiah

The Soul is the Creation of God

The Holy Quran has set forth many conclusive reasons in support of the verity that souls are the creation of God. We set out briefly a few of them by way of illustration.

First, it is obvious that all souls are at all times subordinate to and subject to the command of God Almighty, and there is no other cause for such subordination except that they are the creation of God.

Second, it is also obvious that all souls are limited in their capacities and powers, as is proved by the diversity of the spiritual conditions and capacities of sections of mankind. This limitation must be imposed by a Limitor, which proves that souls are created.

Third, it needs no argument to establish that all souls are, for the purpose of their perfection and survival, dependent upon and in need of a Being who should be Perfect, All-Powerful, All-Knowing and an absolute Benefactor. This proves that they are created.

Fourth, a moment's reflection would show that our souls comprise briefly all the wisdom and the creative skill that are demonstrated in the heavenly and the earthly bodies, that is why the universe on account of its diverse elements is known as the macrocosm and man is called a microcosm. Thus when the universe, on account of its wonderful qualities, is accounted the work of a Wise Creator, how would that not be the creation of God which on account of its personal wonders is a reflection of the whole universe and comprises within itself the wonderful qualities of all the units of the universe and illustrates the consummate wisdom of God Almighty? That which is a manifestation of all the wonders of Divine attributes cannot be outside God's creation. Indeed it bears the seal of creation more than anything else and is a greater proof of the existence of the Creator. This is not only a theoretical proof of the soul being



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

created but is a bright verity. Moreover, other things have no consciousness of their being created but souls are by their very nature conscious of having been created. Even the soul of a savage cannot reconcile itself to being self-existent. This is indicated by the verse which says that God enquired from the souls: Am I not your Lord? that is to say, your Creator, and they responded: Indeed, yes (7: I73). This dialogue indicates the natural relationship between the Creator and His creation, the proof of which is inherent in the nature of souls.

Fifth, as a child partakes somewhat of the features and character of his parents, in the same way souls, which have proceeded from the hand of God Almighty, partake somewhat of the character and qualities of their Creator. Though in cases in which the darkness and heedlessness of being created prevails over some souls the Divine colour appears somewhat faded, yet it cannot be denied that every soul possesses that colour to some degree. In some cases that colour appears unattractive on account of misuse, but that is not the fault of the colour, it is the fault of the use to which it is put. None of man's faculties or powers is evil. It is misuse that makes them appear evil. Every faculty employed on its proper occasion is wholly good and beneficent, and in truth all the faculties that are bestowed on man are a reflection of Divine powers. As a son exhibits some features of his father, in the same way our souls reflect the features and qualities of Divinity which are easily recognized by those who possess comprehension. As a son has natural love for his father we, who are from God, have natural love for Him. If our souls had not a natural relationship with God those who seek Him would have had no means of reaching Him *(Surma Chashm Arya (Qadian, 1886); Now published in Ruhani Khazain, Volume 2 (London, 1984), pp. 119-121).*

The Holy Quran states that God enquired from souls: Am I not your Creator? and they responded: Indeed, yes (7: 173). This means that souls naturally affirm the existence of a Creator, though some people falling in the darkness of heedlessness and being influenced by wrong teachings become atheists or Aryas and deny their Creator contrary to their nature. It is obvious that everyone loves his parents, so much so that some children suffer death in consequence of the death of their mother. Then if souls are not God's creation who has invested them with natural love for God, how is it that when a person achieves full consciousness his heart is drawn to God and his bosom is flooded with the love of God? There must be some relationship between God and souls which makes them fall madly in love with God. They become so devoted to God that they are ready to sacrifice everything for His sake. It is truly a wonderful relationship which is far above one's relationship with father and mother. If souls are self-existent, as is alleged by the Aryas, then how has this relationship been established and who has invested souls with the faculty of love for and devotion to God? This is worthy of reflection and is the key to true comprehension *(Chashma Maarifat, pp. 158—159).*

About the Soul...

The Unity of God Almighty means that His Being alone is the Reality, and that everything else has proceeded from Him, subsists only through Him, and arrives at its perfection only by His grace ~

(The Promised Messiah —Surmah Chashma Arya)

The whole basis of salvation is the personal love of God Almighty, which is the name of the love generated by God Almighty in the very nature of human soul. ~

(The Promised Messiah —Chashma Masihi)

It is part of human nature for the soul to yearn for the One and the Only God Who has no partner and not to be content without communion with Him. ~

(The Promised Messiah —Chashma Masihi)

The main difference in the soul of animals and humans is that the human soul has been given a capacity and a sense of agitation to be near its Creator. This is either missing in the animal soul or is extremely feeble and thus negligible. ~

(Muhammad Zafrulla Khan —Letter to a Dear One)

Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. ~

(Psalms 86:3,4)

When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge. ~

(Proverbs 21:11)

Islamophobia grips western nations

News item: A congressman said that he will not retract a letter warning that unless immigration is tightened, "many more Muslims will be elected" and use the Quran to take the oath of office. Republican Rep. Virgil Goode triggered angry responses with a letter to constituents concerned about a decision by Rep.-elect Keith Ellison of Minnesota, the first Muslim elected to Congress, to use the Quran when he is sworn in.



Ellison was born in Detroit and converted to Islam in college

Summary of Friday Sermon, delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community delivered December 22, 2006. While visiting Germany, Ahmad delivered his Friday Sermon from Frankfurt. He based his sermon on the exceedingly malicious anti-Islamic wave that currently engulfs the Western world.

Ahmad said among various motives for the anti-Islamic sentiments one is that people are against religion in the first place and deny the existence of God and maintain that it is the concept of God that has created all the hostility in the world.

A recent book published in England, which has become a bestseller, tries to contradict the very existence of God (The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins). Similarly in Germany many absurd and nonsensical things are said about God. Recently, the visiting Pope, whose stature claims to be all about love and compassion, gave a lecture in a German university deriding the Islamic concept of God and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). The freedom of speech that he employed to say what he did or which the media uses to make crude remarks about Islam and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has exceeded limits to the extent that it even encompasses Christianity and Jesus (on whom be peace). A recent opera production in Germany that derided religion has been considered acceptable. The pity is that some Muslims have deemed it acceptable as well.

However some priests and others who have religious beliefs have backed the Ahmadi objection over the opera in that it is injurious to religious sentiments. The fact is that they trifle with the feelings of others in the name of freedom of speech and conscience and then maintain that if you do not appreciate these "values" then you should go back to where you came from. They are most sensitive about their own matters. They can say whatever they wish to whomsoever they wish. They may dress any which way they like or they may choose not wear clothes but when a Muslim woman chooses to cover her head, they object. In fact all this is to turn the Muslim youth against Islam.

In reality the world in general and the West in particular is rapidly turning away from religion for the reason that the religion they subscribe to has no dynamism in it. After all, having taken idolatry to the extreme of making a human a god this stage was but inevitable. However, Muslims too, indulging in materialism and latent shirk are on a path that takes one away from God.

In the past it were people like these who did not believe in prophets of God and were steeped in sin who suffered the consequences of their iniquity. The Holy Qur'an relates the account of these ancient people and the iniquities that were prevalent among them. These people, with the exception of a few, did not desist from evil despite the admonishment of the prophets of God. Today all these evils are widespread here, from immodesty to moral depravity to commercial deception. We come across extreme dishonesty and the height of idolatry. The Being that created human for the very purpose of worship of God would obviously send His chastisement if His commandments are not adhered to. Otherwise the earlier people could rightfully claim as to why they were punished and the latter ones were not. He is the Master, He punishes some in this world and some in the Hereafter, however such people do not escape His chastisement. These days people say that God is cruel. God is not cruel, rather it is people of this ilk who undergo suffering due to their own doings.

Death penalty is not legal these days because it is maintained that it is contrary to human compassion. So a killer should not be punished whereas the bereaved family of the victim may suffer. They opt for life imprisonment instead of the death penalty.

Just as they have a right to determine the punishment of a criminal, how could the Master of everything not have the right to punish those who break His laws?

Next Ahmad gave a brief outline of the opera that depicts a most erroneous illustration of Jesus (on whom be peace) and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Ahmad said these worldly people have no idea of God's sense of honour for Himself and for the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) – they blaspheme the

God Whose Rububiyyat and Rahmaniyyat grants them all the worldly possessions.

Ahmad said the staging of this opera was once cancelled, however some government ministers and others are urging that its production should go ahead and are fully supporting it. Ahmad said it has been noted that these 'supporters' of the opera are themselves steeped in depravity.

Ahmad remarked that Moses (on whom be peace) is not shown at any point in the opera. We certainly do not say that he should have been shown. However, some maintain that this 'omission' could be to prevent any offence to the Jewish people. However, Ahmad said that in his opinion it was not simply this. Ahmad thinks this is a much deeper conspiracy.

Today, it is the task of the Ahmadi to respond to this and save people from Divine chastisement. Our message to them should be that the advent of prophets is to save humanity from darkness and we should invite them to the God of Islam Who despite their trespasses grants them by virtue of His Rahmaniyyat. That they may seek forgiveness and discard the thought that God can be cruel. On the contrary He sends His prophets for the betterment of people and these prophets weary themselves with sheer concern for their people. The prophets of God do not want any reward from the people for their reward is with Allah. It is also the obligation of an Ahmadi to tell people that in this age Allah has sent a prophet in representation of the last Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

Ahmad said the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has most lovingly explained his advent in that he has been sent to remove the ill will that has been created between man and his Maker, to abolish religious wars and to demonstrate a model of humanity that has been suppressed. By providing us with an immense treasure of knowledge and spiritual discernment, the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has prepared us for the task of taking this message to others. It is the task of each Ahmadi to rise and present the true concept of God so that the majority of people may return to acknowledging God and the Seal of all the prophets and God's holy people, so that instead of fighting and hostilities people honour each other's rights and develop spiritually.

Ahmad urged the German Jama'at not to be despondent. He said Ahmadiyyat will spread among the German people. If the Ahmadis of today perform their task in a good manner a revolution can be brought about in that nation.

Ahmad said literature is printed and distributed in the style of an enterprise and then dropped. Responses to most current issues are available, what is needed is to circulate them. Each Ahmadi man, woman, old and young needs to take relevant Tabligh literature and our responses to the current issues to the German people. Maximise the use of email and the internet for these positive steps. True introduction of Ahmadiyyat should be provided to each government minister, each newspaper and each educated person.

Ahmad read extract from the writings of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) urging propagation of Islam.

Ahmad motivated the German Ahmadis to try harder than before to take the message of Islam to their people so that they may recognise the One God.

He said no doubt our resources are limited but whatever we have the capacity for should be employed properly. An introductory pamphlet should reach in each town whether Ahmadis reside there or not, in addition the electronic resources should be utilised.

Ahmad said a response is being published to the Pope's comments in the shape of a booklet. It should reach the Pope and every educated person so that they are informed about the truth about God and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) who heralded love, compassion and humility more than anyone else. Ahmad instructed that it is the task of old and young to take the Tabligh material personally to everyone. However, to bring about results is with God.

Citing verse 34 of Surah Ha Mim Al Sajdah (41:34) Ahmad said, first and foremost we have to espouse the Quranic teaching in our daily lives otherwise no effort will ever bear fruit. It is essential to keep all one's affairs wholesome with God and to pay the dues of fellow humans, to honour the rights of close relatives, the rights of the neighbours and the rights of the environment. It is important to help whoever is in need of help.

If one's own situation is such that parents are unhappy with one or one's wife and children are discontented or women who indulge improperly in fashion or those who do not control their temper and create discord – all these are not good deeds and people who give in to them are not effective at Tabligh. Therefore it is vital to be exemplary.

Remember that it is God's promise with the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) that 'I shall grant you dominance'. Now this dominance/triumph will be worldwide, in Europe, Asia, Africa, America and InshaAllah Oceania. It is your task to carry out Tabligh demonstrating total obedience and good deeds. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said 'This hope of mine is not imaginary, rather I have received this glad tiding through the holy revelation of God'.

In conclusion Ahmad said this derision of religion is there for us to take note of our task. The final decision has been made, however, we need to focus and take this message forward. This is the greatest service to humanity. May Allah enable us all to do this.

Alislam.org Team takes full responsibility for any errors or miscommunication in this Synopsis of the Friday Sermon.

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The Significance and Philosophy of Prayer

Summary of Friday Sermon, delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community delivered September 22, 2006.



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

Ahmad advised everyone to pray to Allah for safeguard from evil and to be enabled to do good, for without His grace and mercy neither can one be protected from evil nor can one attain the Paradise in this world and the Hereafter. How necessary does it then become to remember Him at all times and to ever seek from Him.

Ahmad said it is incumbent for a believer who has perfect belief in Allah to seek from Allah at every time of need, even when one is in need of something as minor as a shoelace.

Ahmad advised everyone to pray to Allah for safeguard from evil and to be enabled to do good, for without His grace and mercy neither can one be protected from evil nor can one attain the Paradise in this world and the Hereafter. How necessary does it then become to remember Him at all times and to ever seek from Him.

Citing verse 78 of Surah Al Furqan (25:78) Ahmad said the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) has explained to us that it is Allah's law that His special grace is granted to one who sincerely adopts Unity of God and prayer; Allah has no needs; if we do not take on good ways and do not spend time in His remembrance, He has no care. This verse elucidates the other Qur'anic verse that unfolds the purpose for the creation of man (51:57) and proves that Allah is not hasty in destroying those who are not negligent towards religion. The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) urged that this was a most important commandment. Allah listens to and accepts the prayer that is made with complete sincerity, made to seek His pleasure and with reliance in Him.

Citing verse 61 of Surah Al Mu'min (40:51) again Ahmad explained in the words of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) that it is a matter of principle that one who has not understood the essence and the reality of prayer would be in the loss. God and His servants have the mutual power of fusion/imbibing; at the time of prayer this quality creates a singular ambience. A sincere servant of God, as if perishes in his perfect devotion to his God and this is the stage when he attains remarkable Divine closeness and his being totally submits itself to his God.

Ahmad said if one is aware of the quintessence of prayer then one must also be aware of its capacity of acceptance. In the mutual capacity of fusion/imbibing between God and His servant it is God Who precedes by means of manifestation of His attribute of Rahmaniyyat (Divine quality of being Gracious) and endows man with innumerable blessings at every step. When His servant becomes devoted to his God purely for the sake of God and with complete sincerity, Allah gets closer still. When God gets so close to His servant that the stage of fusion/imbibing is accomplished, it is then that prayers are granted miraculous acceptance. Ahmad explained that even in everyday life when an ordinary person calls on God in distress, he does so in a state of great humility and due to his troubles and therefore witnesses acceptance of prayer.

Ahmad said it is by virtue of the Divine quality of Rahmaniyyat that God puts all earthly and heavenly means at the service

of man. Ahmad referred to a recent sermon of his on acceptance of prayers of pious elders and said that these people had certainly attained the afore-mentioned station. Ahmad said today we also have such people in our Community. All that is needed is to go be attracted to Him with sincerity of heart.

Citing verse 111 of Surah Bani Israel (17:111) Ahmad explained that Allah declares that we should call onto Him with His different names with reference to and in accordance to our needs for He has great regard for His names, which are a reflection of His attributes. We have been taught all these Divine names to enable us to pray to Him and for the acceptance of our prayers. We should therefore try and get a comprehension and a perception of these names and then call onto Him with reference to the Divine attributes.

Next Ahmad expounded some Qur'anic verses to seek Divine beneficence. Explaining, Ahmad said no one should harbor pride over a high-powered job or a prosperous business, or noble lineage or indeed one's highbrow propensity.

Ahmad quoted verse 102 of Surah Yusuf which is a prayer of gratefulness to God for good granted in this world and of hope for death in a state of submission. Ahmad said this Qur'anic prayer is not simply to expound an incident rather it ought to be put in practice by the believers so that they may be counted among the righteous in death.

Ahmad expounded some of the illimitable blessings that God has put in place in the heavens and the earth for the benefit of creation, like day and night, seasons, vegetation etc. and said that those who reflect over these blessings and are thankful to God also reflect over the Hereafter and pray for forgiveness. Ahmad cited verse 192 of Surah Al Imran (3:192) in this instance and in explanation quoted the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) that the verse speaks of people who, unlike the worldly people, do not merely look upon the phenomenon of nature in the material sense, rather they ponder over their far-reaching benefits and advantages for mankind and over their Creator and this strengthens them in their faith.

Next Ahmad cited verses 84 to 86 of Surah Al Shu'ara which comprise prayers for wisdom and to be counted among the righteous, for a good reputation after one has passed away and most significantly for elevated status in the Hereafter.

Ahmad referred to verse 75 of Surah Al Furqan (25:75) and gave a detailed discourse on the significance of praying for one's children to be righteous and pious. Quoting from the writings of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) Ahmad said one should not limit one's wish to have children to the biological desire. The purpose of man's creation is to worship God so if a person does not follow the path of guidance himself his wish to have children would merely entail that he would be leaving a successor to his bad ways; he likened the wish to have a child so that he/she may grow up to be a successful person to shirk and said that the desire to have children should only be to attain good.



Ahmad said these are the standards that the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wished to see in all Ahmadis as regards their children. In light of the Qur'anic teachings, he greatly stressed on moral training of children and for being prayerful for them.

Ahmad said for each Ahmadi his/her child is trust of the Community; as for those whose children are in the Waqf e Nau program (New Devotees to Islam), they are fathers of children who have offered themselves on the precept of Ishmael[as] therefore these father need to demonstrate the model of Ibrahim[as].

Ahmad said if we prayed while fulfilling the requisites of prayers then our prayers would attain acceptance. Ahmad prayed that may we be enabled to raise our standards of prayers while understanding the philosophy of prayer. ◆

The Holy Qur'an: Spirit & Soul

Spirit (*Ruh*) and Soul (*Nafs*)

By Imam Mubasher Ahmad



In general speech, a person's Spirit *(Ruh*) and Soul (*Nafs)* are usually interchangeable. At times the Qur'an also uses these two terms indicating the same thing; that is, the life force within the human body. However, in several instances in the Quran, these terms have different meanings. Therein Spirit denotes the spiritual faculty of man to receive God's word, and Soul indicates the Self, a living person, or the entire inner nature of man – his heart, mind and conscience. The Quran also claims that God has Spirit, and He breathes His Spirit in human beings. This means that God gives life to humans, and also that a spiritual faculty is granted to them enabling them to receive the Divine communion by God's will.

Furthermore, in the Quran, the term Spirit is never used in the plural. There is no mention of "spirits" as some natural or supernatural beings, but the words *nafusâ* or *anfasâ* are used in the plural form indicating "souls," "persons," "people," or "selves." For example:

"When various people (nafus) are brought together (81:8)." *"If you do good works, you will do good for your own souls (anfusaykum)* (17:8)."

The angels would say to the believers:

"We are your friends in this life and in the Hereafter. Therein you will have all that your souls (anfusokum) will desire" (41:32).

According to the Qur'an, God's creative process takes place in two ways: First, a life form is brought into existence out of nothingness. This is known as creation by His command (*amr*). Second, a new form is given (*khalq)* to something already existing. In response to the question "What is Spirit?", the Qur'an says:

"And they ask you (the Prophet) concerning the Spirit. Say, 'The Spirit has been created by the command (amr) of my Lord (Qul ir Ruho min amr e Rabbii); and the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little" (17:85).

Thus, the Spirit is brought into existence out of nothingness. In contrast, a soul is created out of human body in the process of embryonic development in the womb.

"We created man from an extract of clay; then We placed him as drop of sperm in a safe depository; then We fashioned the sperm into a clot; then We fashioned the clot into a shapeless lump; then We fashioned bones out of this lump; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed it into another creation. So, blessed be Allah, the Best of creators" (23: 13-15).

It is also interesting to note that the Qur'an makes a unique claim that all souls were created out of single soul:

"He created you from a single soul (khalaqa kum min nafsin wahidah) then from that He made its mate" (39:7). *"O ye people! Fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul (nafsin wahidah); and created from the same its mate, and through them both He caused to spread a large number of men and women"* (4:2). *"And He it is Who has produced you from a single soul (nafsin wahidah)"* (6:98).

The uniqueness of all souls having the same essence and having been produced from the single source remains ingrained in all of them throughout their lives. The Quran, therefore, further proclaims:

"Your creation and your resurrection are only like (the creation and resurrection of) a single soul" (31:29).

This means that all humans are subject to the same laws of God. The causes of progress or degradation of individuals and nations always remain the same in their essence.

Although "the evil inciting" nature of the Soul is acknowledged in the Qur'an, there is no mention of any ill-provoking Spirit or "evil spirits." The Spirit is always good, pure and estimable. As God's Spirit, it is sacred. The Spirit is either the breath of God (15:30), (38:73); or the angel Gabriel (26:194), or the life-giving Word of God, the Divine revelation, or inspiration (4:172) (16:3) (58:23). In contrast, the Soul is presented as neutral capable of becoming good or evil. Some souls do good deeds, and some wrong themselves:

"And among their progeny are (some persons) who perform excellent deeds and others who are clearly unjust to their souls (zalimul li nafsihii)" (37:114).

The soul may desire evil (53:24). We read in the Quran:

"And I do not hold my own self to be free from weakness; for, the soul is surely prone to enjoin evil (nafs al amarah) save that whereon my Lord has mercy (12:55). *Will you then, every time a Messenger comes to you with what your souls (anfoso-kum) had not desired, behaved arrogantly and treat some as liars and slay others?"* (2:88), (5:71).

Similarly, the "jealousy" of souls is mentioned in the Qur'an (2:109). Souls are prone to avarice/covetousness (4:129), (59:10), (64:17). Souls have the capacity to become distressed (9:118). Souls can make a serious matter appear light in ones eyes (12:19). We read about one of the sons of Adam[as] of his soul prompting him to slay his brother (5:31).

However, the Soul has the capacity to overcome all the evil temptations that it may encounter and the Qur'an tell us that God, the Creator of Soul, holds it in high esteem. God brings Soul as a witness to the truth:

"By the Soul, and its perfection — that HE revealed to it the ways of evil and the ways of righteousness — he indeed prospers who purifies it, and he is ruined who corrupts it" (91:8-11).

Calling anything as witness, according to the Qur'anic phraseology, is for the purpose of doing honor to it by God. In Sura Al-Qiyamah, Soul is again called by Allah as witness:

"And I do call to witness the self-accusing soul (Nafse lawwamah)!" (75:3).

Human soul reproves the evil acts and tries not to succumb to temptations. With

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consistent striving, Soul reaches an elevated state of being firmly connected with God. At this stage it is called the soul at rest – the contented souls (*Nafse-Mutma'innah*):

"O soul at rest that has found comfort in God return to your Lord, you well pleased with Him and He well pleased with you. Now join My chosen servants and enter into My Garden" (89:28-31).

Accountability of souls is one of the vastly discussed themes of the Qur'an. After assuring mankind that:

"No soul is charged save to its capacity" (2:234), (6:153), (7:43). *"And fear the day when no soul shall serve as a substitute for another soul at all, nor shall intercession be accepted for it; nor shall ransom be taken from it; nor shall they be helped"* (2:49).

The believers are reminded to look after their souls as they stand responsible for all they did in this life (5:106) because:

"God may recompense every soul for its earnings" (14:51). *"And let alone those who take their religion for sport and a pastime, and whom worldly life has beguiled. And admonish people thereby lest a soul be given up to destruction for what it has earned"* (6:71). *"If you do good, it is your own souls you do good to"* (17:7), (17:15), (35:18), (39:41), (73:20). *"Let every soul consider what it has forwarded for the morrow"* (59:18).

Punishment and reward for the souls are fully covered in the Qur'an:

"Every soul shall be paid in full" (2:281), (3:30); *"As far those who say, Our Lord is Allah, and then remain steadfast, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not, nor grieve, and rejoice in the Garden that you were promised. We are your friends in this life and the Hereafter. Therein you will have that your souls desired"* (41:31-32). *"And no soul knows what joy of the eyes is kept hidden for them, as a reward for their good works"* (32:18).

It is obvious that the term soul is frequently used (both in singular and plural forms) for living person(s). The famous quote from the Quran:

"Every soul shall taste of death" (3:185), (21:35), (29:57), clearly refers to everything that has life. Death of a person is mentioned at various places as death of a soul. For example, *"And no soul dies but by the leave of God, — a decree with a fixed term"* (3:146). *"And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it shall die"* (31:35). *"We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killed a soul (mun qatala nafsum)" (*5:32). *"You slay not the soul God has forbidden"* (6:152). *"Moses said, My Lord, I killed a soul from among them (inni qatalto minhum nafsan)"* (28:33).

But again, Soul (*nafs*) is something that departs at the time of death:

"And if you could only see, when the wrongdoers are in the agonies of death, and the angels stretch forth their hands, saying, Yield up your souls (akhrijoo anfusakum)" (6:94). *"Allah takes the souls of men at the time of their death"* (39:42).

In the Qur'anic terminology, the term Soul (*nafs)* can also be translated as heart or mind or human conscience: *"and whether you disclose what is in your minds/hearts (fi anfusakum)"* (2:285); *"They hide in their minds/hearts what they disclose not to you"* (3:155). *"Allah knows best what is in their hearts"* (11:32). *"Your Lord knows best what is in your minds/hearts (fi nufuse kum)"* (17:26). *"And assuredly We have created man and We know what man's mind (nafso ho) whispers in him"* (50:17). *"They denied them, though their souls acknowledged them"* (27:14).

The terms Spirit (*Ruh)* and Soul (*Nafs)* both have also been used in the Holy Quran with reference to God's nature. The difference is that God's Spirit (*Ruh)* is always used as a noun, while God's Soul (*Nafs)* is used as a

pronoun, as in Himself – (*nafsihii). He has taken upon Himself (kataba la nafsihi) to show mercy (6:12).* Similarly, *Your Lord has taken upon Himself (kataba rubbo kum la nafsihi) to show mercy.* (6:55). Only at one place in the Qur'an, Soul (*Nafs)* of God is referred to as noun, but it does not indicate God having a soul. It indicates God's All-Knowing Self – His mind. In response to God asking a question of the Prophet Jesus[as], Jesus[as] would say: *You know what is in my mind (fi nafsi), and I know not what in Your mind/ knowledge (fi nafsika*) (5:117).

The use of the word Spirit belonging to God is evident in the following verses:

"And remember when your Lord said to the angels, when I have fashioned him (man/ basher) in perfection and have breathed into him My Spirit, (wa nafakhto fihi min Ruhii) fall ye down in submission to him" (15:29-30), (38:72-73). *"And He began the creation of man (insaan) from clay; then He made his progeny from an extract of an insignificant fluid; then He endowed him with perfect faculties and breathed into him of His Spirit. (wa nafakha fihi min Ruhihii)"* (32:8-10). *"And remember her (Mary) who preserved her chastity; so We breathed into her Our Spirit and We made her and her son a Sign for peoples"* (21:92). *"And the example of Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts – so We breathed into her Our Spirit – and she fulfilled in her person the words of her Lord and His Books and was one of the obedient"* (66:13).

At a few places in the Qur'an, the Spirit and the angels are mentioned together. For example:

"The angels and the Spirit, ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years" (70:5). *"On the day when the Spirit and the angels will stand in rows, they shall not speak except whom the Gracious God will permit and who will speak only what is right"* (78:39). *"The Night of Destiny is better than a thousand months. Therein descend angels and the Spirit by the command of their Lord – with every matter"* (97:4).

God's Spirit or/and angels also appears to some in human form. For example:

"We sent Our Spirit to her (Mary, the mother of Jesus) and he appeared to her in the form of a perfect man" (19:18).

The angel Gabriel (Jibril) who brings down God's revelations to man is also called the Spirit in Qur'anic terminology, sometimes with added adjectives such as the Faithful Spirit and the Holy Spirit – *Ruh-ul-Ameen* and *Ruh-ul-Qudus*. We read in the Qur'an:

"Say It is brought down by the Holy Spirit from your Lord with truth, that He may strengthen those who believe and as guidance and glad tidings for Muslims" (16:103). "And verily this (Qur'an) is a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds. The Spirit, faithful to the trust, has descended with it on your heart, that you may be of the Warners in plain and clear Arabic language" (26:193-196).

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In this verse the faithful Spirit *(Ruh-ul-Ameen*) is the angel Gabriel as it is evident from reading another similar verse of the Holy Quran:

"Say, Whosoever is an enemy to Gabriel — for he it is who has caused it (the Qur'an) to descend on your heart by the command of Allah, fulfilling that (revelation) which precedes it, and is guidance and glad tidings to the believers" (2:98).

The Holy Spirit is given to all the Messengers of Allah and their followers to confirm their truth and to strengthen them against bitter opposition and persecution. The Qur'an says:

"And verily We gave Moses the Book and caused Messengers to follow in his footsteps after him; and to Jesus, son of Mary, We gave manifest Signs, and strengthened him with the Spirit of holiness (bi Ruh ul Qudus). Will you then, every time a Messenger comes to you with what you yourselves (anfusakum) desire not, behave arrogantly and treat some as liars and slay them?" (2:88); *"And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs, and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit (bi Ruh ul Qudus)"* (2:254), (5:111).

God strengthens the Messengers with the Spirit and also the believers who follow them. Referring to the believers, Allah says:

"These are they in whose hearts He has inscribed true faith and whom He has strengthened with the Spirit from Himself (ayyada hum bi Ruhim min ho)" (5:23).

The Qur'an also uses the term Spirit (*Ruh*) for Divine revelations:

"He (God) sends His Spirit (Ruha) by His command (amr) upon whosoever of His servants He pleases, that He may give warning of the Day of Meeting" (40:16).

And it is not for a man that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a *"messenger to reveal His command what HE pleases. Surely He is High, Wise. And thusWe have revealed to you the Spirit by Our command (Ruh ammin amrina). You did not know what the Book was, nor what the faith"* (42:52-53).

In the context of these verses, it is clear that the term Spirit means the Word of God, which is the Qur'an, through which a morally dead people received new spiritual life. ◆

What is the impact of the soul and the body on each other?

As the soul is affected by physical conduct, in the same way sometimes the soul affects the body. For instance, when a person experiences sorrow his eyes become wet, and a person who feels happy, smiles. All our natural actions like eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, moving about, resting, bathing etc., affect our spiritual condition. Our physical structure is related intimately to our total humanity. If a certain part of the brain is injured memory is immediately lost. An injury to another part of the brain causes loss of consciousness. Poisonous air affects the body and through it the mind, and the whole inner system, to which the moral impulses are related, is impaired and the unfortunate victim passes out quickly like a madman. Thus physical injuries disclose that there is a mysterious relationship between the soul and the body which is beyond the ken of man. Reflection shows that the body is the mother of the soul. The soul does not descend from outside into the womb of a pregnant woman. It is a light that is inherent in the sperm which begins to shine forth with the development of the embryo. The Word of God Almighty conveys to us that the soul becomes manifest from the framework that is prepared in the womb from the sperm, as is said in the Holy Quran: Then We develop it into a new creation. So blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators (23:15).

In old age a person arrives at a stage in which, after having acquired much knowledge he loses it all. (22:6) All this observation of ours is proof enough that the soul without the body amounts to nothing. This is reinforced by the thought that if the soul without the body had amounted to anything, it would have been without purpose for God Almighty to set up a relationship between it and a mortal body. Further it is worthy of note that God Almighty has created mall for limitless progress. Then if the soul is not able to achieve the progress possible in this brief life without the companionship of the body. How can we expect that it would be able, by itself, without the companionship of the body, achieve limitless progress in the hereafter.

All this shows that according to Islamic principles, for the soul to act perfectly it is necessary for it to enjoy the companionship of a body at all times.

Defining the Soul: Perceptions in World Religions

•The Jewish Soul **•The Muslim Soul**

•The Christian Soul **•The Hindu and the Buddhist Soul**

By Aisha Husain Ahmad

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the soul as "the spiritual element of a person, regarded as immortal." The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as "the spiritual principle embodied in human beings, all rational and spiritual beings, or the universe." And the Cambridge International dictionary defines the soul as "the spiritual part of a person which some people believe continues to exist in some form after the body has died." In all three definitions, the use of the word "spiritual" is the common thread. All three draw a correlation between "soul" and "spirit", and in fact, the line between these two is so faint that they are often used interchangeably. But what exactly is the soul? Where did the concept come from? In a society obsessed with materialism, there is much to be said for the enduring presence of this ethereal entity. Almost every religion contains some sort of ideology in reference to the soul. By exploring these ideologies, one may begin to gain some insight into this widely acknowledged yet rarely understood concept.



The concept of the soul arose from the human need to feel some sort of connection to the divine. In studying the ancient polytheistic philosophies, such as Greek and the Egyptian, it becomes clear that the afterlife played an extremely vital part in these people's earthly lives. The view that one should be judged by one's earthly deeds is not a new one. The ancients viewed the body as a vessel for an intrinsic energy that lived on even after death. Whatever deeds a person did in his lifetime, whether good or evil, these deeds had an impact on what happened to the person after death. As the ancient philosophies died out and the monotheistic religions began to emerge, the relationship between humans and the divine, and thus the concept of the soul, became more pronounced.

The Jewish Soul

Judaism is the oldest of the three major monotheistic religions prevalent today. It defines the soul as a reflection of God in human beings. Therefore, a spiritual realm exists beyond the individual that sustains and energizes the soul. Jewish belief states that the body is from the earth, but that the soul is from God. The Torah itself, however, does not make any distinction between these two and does not even acknowledge them as different parts in a human being. A human being is viewed as a unified being, described in Hebrew as *nefesh*. This word encompasses two ideas. It refers to human life in general and to human character in particular. In describing human life, there are a few more terms that are utilized. The word *ruah* means "spirit" and *neshamah* means "breath." In the Torah there are no differentiations made among all these terms. They all roughly define the soul. In the Book of Job, it states, "In whose hand is the life [*nefesh*] of every living thing, and the breath [*ruah*] of all mankind" (Job 12:10). The underlying and fundamental principle idea in Judaism in regards to the soul is that the soul comes from God. This view is underlined in one of the Jewish daily prayers:

"The soul You have given me is pure, my God. You created it, You formed it, You breathed it into me, and You preserve it within me. You will also take it from me, and You will restore it to me in time to come. So long as this soul is within me I acknowledge You, Lord my God and God of my fathers, Master of all creation, Lord of all the Souls. Praised are You, Lord, who restores the soul to the lifeless, exhausted body." [1]

It is God's power that breathes life into the body so that it can exist in its visible manifestation. This divine breath is what the *ruah* and the *neshamah* are, and the *nefesh*, or human life, is what results from this infusion of divinity.

Though the Torah makes no distinction between human life and the soul, there eventually came about some polarization regarding these concepts. A dualistic view of the world began to emerge as rabbinic sages became more and more prevalent. Everything in the world was divided into opposites: God and humans, holy and unholy, and body and soul. These later teachings stated that a human being's body and soul fall somewhere between an animal and an angel's. An animal's body and soul are both material and earthly, whereas an angel's body and soul are entirely heavenly and ethereal. In humans, the duality comes about from the idea that the human body is earthly and the human soul is heavenly. Therefore, a human consists of both an animalistic and angelic nature. Whatever he actualizes ultimately affects his soul. A hierarchy of sorts eventually evolved from these perceptions. This hierarchy consisted of three levels. The first dealt with the life force, the *nefesh*. This was the force, the "animating spirit" that was common to all living things and was involved in the nutritive and preservative function of the body. In other words, this involved basic life needs such as food, water, sleep, etc. The second level was the *ruah*, the breath of the divine. This "affective spirit" gave humans the edge over animals by providing a conscience of sorts and leading humans towards morality and a deeper spiritual understanding of the divine. The final level, the attainment of the actual soul, would come about when one would perfect this spiritual understanding and reach *neshamah*, which would be the ultimate communion of his soul with God. This hierarchy is a ladder of sorts. According to the Jewish belief, everyone has the capability to traverse this ladder and elevate his soul to the highest rung, thereby achieving spiritual communion with God.

The Christian Soul

The concept of the soul in Christianity has much of its roots in Judaism. However, the New Testament does introduce a new term in regards to the soul. In the Judaic tradition, the Hebrew terms for soul basically dealt with the breath, which was a symbol of life. The New Testament contains the word *psuche*, which has complex overtones associated with life. When the *psuche* is dedicated wholly to God, one can achieve eternal salvation and life. This idea differs from the Judaic thought in that the term *psuche* invokes the concept of the "self."[2] This idea can become too complex and abstract to fully comprehend without repetitive study. Though the words "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably, there is a clear distinction in the Christian tradition. The *psuche* is associated with the soul, while the Greek word *pneuma* is associated with the spirit. The *pneuma* is consistent with the Hebrew *ruah* while the *psuche* is consistent with the Hebrew *neshamah*. In Jewish tradition, *ruah* started out as the breath of life from God, or spirit in Christianity. In Christianity, this is where the word *pneuma* would be used. In contrast, *psuche* is what the soul is, not just the breath of life from the divine, but a realization of the self that would allow one to put himself under the care of Jesus and insure eternal salvation and life.[2] It is not just a communion of his soul with God, but it is the achievement of eternal life as well.

The eternalness of the Christian soul comes from the power of Christ's resurrection. Man has no more entitlement to immortality than any other life form. However, because of Christ rising from the dead, anyone who surrenders to him will be granted eternal life in the hereafter. In Judaic tradition, one need only understand the divine to such a point to achieve oneness with God. In Christian thought, your soul can achieve eternal life only if you wholly surrender to Christ. It is stated in Genesis that God breathed his Spirit into every human being and gave each one life. Along with the life comes the soul, but this soul can only be immortal through the acceptance of Christ.

The Hindu and the Buddhist Soul

In both the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the idea of *samsara* or reincarnation plays a central role in the faith.[3] *Samsara* is described as the unending cycle of birth, death, and rebirth by which all living things pass through until they find a means of liberation from this cycle. In the Hindu religion, the soul, or *atman* is viewed as changeless. This soul maintains an ultimate identity that transmigrates from one incarnation to another according to past deeds.[4] However, the Buddha rejected this theory, stating that humans were ever-changing, therefore making the concept of unchanging soul impossible. The Buddha taught the concept of the *anatman*, or non-self. His view of humans was that they possessed a consciousness that was ever-changing but would leave the body at death, passing on to be reincarnated in the next life form.[3] This is the main difference between the idea of the soul in Hinduism and Buddhism. After that, the concept of *karma* comes into play. *Karma* means "deeds," but also involves the consequences of those deeds. *Karma* is the primary determining factor that decides the nature of a human's (or any other living thing for that matter) rebirth after death. In both religions, it is the goal in every life to do such deeds that you establish a good *karma*, ultimately progressing on the path of enlightenment and achieving a oneness with the divine.[3] That is when a living entity is finally free of the cycle of reincarnation and is a part of the divine.

The Muslim Soul

The Islamic concept of the soul fuses both Judaic and Christian traditions. Because the knowledge of both these earlier religions came from Allah, their inherent ideologies about the soul are on the right path. However, both these older teachings are still ambiguous and vague about the soul. Like Christianity, Islam makes a distinction between the soul and the spirit. The Arabic words *ruh* and *nafs* mean spirit and soul, respectively. Again, as in the previous teachings, *ruh* (spirit) means "breath"

or "wind" and *nafs* (soul) is the self. Specifically, the *ruh* is Allah's spirit and the *nafs* is the human soul that came about when Allah breathed life into humans.[5] In *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad[as] beautifully explains the creation of the soul:

"It is absolutely true that the soul is a fine light developed inside the body and which is nurtured in the womb. To begin with it is hidden and imperceptible and later it is made manifest. From the very beginning its essence is present in the sperm…It is latent in the sperm as fire is latent in the flint. The Book of God does not mean that the soul descends from heaven as a separate entity or falls upon the earth from the atmosphere and then by chance gets mixed with the sperm and enter the womb with it. There is no basis for such a notion. The law of nature rejects it…The truth is that the soul is developed in the body and this also proves that it is created and it is not self-existent."

Hadhrat Ahmad[as] also states that the actions of the body clearly affect the soul. One's physical condition affects his spiritual condition, and vice versa. As outlined in the Holy Qu'ran and explained by Hadhrat Ahmad[as], the soul has three stages.

As previously explained, a person's physical condition affects his spirituality. This idea is fundamentally based in the Holy Qu'ran regarding the first state of man, which deals with the natural and physical aspect of humans. The first state is *Nafse Ammarah*, which means *the self that incites to evil*. Hadhrat Ahmad[as] relates:

"This means that it is characteristic of the human self that it incites man to evil and is opposed to his attainment of perfection and to his moral state, and urges him towards undesirable and evil ways. Thus the propensity towards evil and intemperance is a human state which predominates over the mind of a person before he enters upon the moral state."[6]

This is the natural state of man before he begins his journey towards spirituality. He is guided only by his physical needs and is not unlike animals in this sense.

The Holy Qu'ran designates the second state of man as *Nafse Lawwama*.

This is the reproving state, the state where man ceases to behave like animals and begins a journey towards morality. In this state, a person begins to reprove himself and is not blindly led by his natural desires. He learns to suppress and regulate those desires that incite him towards evil. However, in this state, the soul is still immature. The reason is that even though a person a reproving himself, he is still "not effective in practicing virtue and occasionally it is dominated by natural emotions, when it stumbles and falls."[6]

As water flowing down from a height, on account of its volume and the absence of any obstruction, rushes with great force, in the same way the soul at rest flows towards God.

Ahmad[as] describes this state beautifully, comparing it to the will of a child who does not wish to fall but does so out of weakness. Yet there exists the desire to seek communion with Allah and lead a moral and spiritual life.

The third state is called *Nafse Mutmainnah*. In chapter 89, verses 28-31, the Holy Qu'ran says: "O soul at rest that has found comfort in God return to thy Lord, thou well pleased with Him and He well pleased with thee. Now join My chosen servants and enter into My garden." Hadhrat Ahmad[as] describes this state:

"This is the stage when the soul of a person being delivered from all weaknesses is filled with spiritual powers and establishes a relationship with God Almighty without Whose support it cannot exist. As water flowing down from a height, on account of its volume and the absence of any obstruction, rushes with great force, in the same way the soul at rest flows towards God. That is indicated by the divine direction to the soul that has found transformation in this very life and is bestowed a paradise while still in this world. As this verse indicates in its direction to such a soul to return to its Lord, it is nourished by its Lord and its love of God becomes its nurture, and it drinks at this fountain of life and is thus delivered from death."

In chapter 91, verses 10-11, the Holy Qu'ran states, "He who purifies his soul of earthly passions shall be saved and shall not suffer ruin, but he who is overcome by his earthly passions should despair of life." Islam gives a clear and concise portrait of what the soul is and also provides the guidance needed to transport the soul to the highest moral and spiritual stage. These three stages are inextricably intertwined. How a person conducts oneself physically affects one morally and spiritually. Therefore, a person's physical state can either be a hindrance or a catalyst in the quest for divine communion. By controlling oneself physically, one smoothly progresses to the moral and spiritual states. On the other hand, reckless abandon of one's natural desires can lead one away from anything divine, and ultimately to self-destruction.

The synergy between body and soul is a philosophically complex subject. While each religion has its own specific ideas pertaining to the soul and its journey, the underlying theory is the same: the soul is the spiritual component of one's physical self that endeavors to connect with the divine. Without it, human life has no meaning and no definition. One must rise above one's natural desires in order to unleash the full powers and potential of the soul. Once this is done, a person can enjoy a full relationship with the Almighty and achieve paradise in this world and the next.

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Perspectives: Can We Contact The Dearly Departed?

As a non-Muslim, I experienced "deja vu" many times, true dreams, a comforting presence and heard voices of people when no one was there. As a Muslim, however, I received greater clarity. I understood the underlying purpose of the Creator so the dreams changed from black and white to full color with the best reception. What my mind could not comprehend was Allah's knowledge of the unseen.

By Allison-Ayesha Khan

These days we have the convenience of mobile phones, telephones, e-mail, snail-mail, and faxes to aid us in communicating with one another. How difficult it is then to believe that once one dies one is truly beyond reach!

The answer to the question "Can we contact our dear, departed loved ones?" lies in Chapter 23, verses 100-101 of the Holy Qur'an.

"Until when death comes to one of them, he says entreatingly, 'My Lord, send me back, that I may do righteous deeds in the life that I have left behind.' Never it is but a word that he utters. And behind them is a barrier until the day when they shall be raised again."

Allah reminds us that we are procrastinators by nature. When the examination time arrives, some people still hope to go back to their rooms for a second chance to study for the exam. But, alas, the time has already passed to get ready for the most important exam.

Allah does not present us with a list of our shortcomings to remind us what vain pursuits we wasted our time and attention on. The list would surely exceed the length of the Holy Qur'an itself. Allah does not even reproach us. It is just presented to us as a fait accompli that some people will immediately be filled with remorse, regret and vain desires when they are confronted with the reality of the next world and their Creator, the perfect Judge. Allah is reminding us that after death, we cannot run and we cannot hide from our accounting. Consequently, reading this verse of the Holy Qur'an should encourage each of us to accumulate as many righteous deeds in this world as possible, which will allow us to escape this regret on the Day of Judgment.

But what does all this have to do with our dear, departed loved ones? Allah tells us that the door closes after death. Therefore, no one can enter or leave His kingdom without His permission. The romantic poets called it "the veil." It is hard to accept. I admit that I have had to struggle with this question myself as I have only been a Muslim for eleven years. Why is it a struggle?

When we are thinking emotionally, logic of course has very little to do with anything. Let us look at a few reasons why people want to contact their dear departed loved ones. The first reason is the most obvious. We might miss a family member who died. Because our emotions for that person live on after the death, it is difficult to believe that the relationship is completely severed. Logic tells us the loved one is gone, but the emotional side of the brain cannot accept it. Plain and simple, we want them back. But this "I want it" attitude is misplaced emotion. It may be surprising when we are talking about yearning for a loved one who is gone, but it is the ego crying out for gratification. My friend's niece said it best "If a person wants a treat and a person needs a treat, then a person should get a treat?"

Sometimes we cannot move on after the death of a loved one, especially if the loved one was young or there was a tragic ending. We might cry for Hamlet after he loses his father, or Ophelia and his mother because she was unfaithful to his father's memory. But such tragedies are dispelled like so much magic if we say *Inna lillahey wa inna elayhay rajeeoon*. ("From God he came and to God he has returned.") It is a complete acceptance that Allah, the Creator, is alpha and omega – our starting place and ending place.

This prayer, simply put, takes the sting out of death. Repeating this prayer helps us to accept what seems emotionally unacceptable to us. It is destiny that someone we loved came into this world and now they have returned to their source, the Creator. We neither have the right to change it nor to regret it. The ego may have difficulty with this, since the psychic hotline is there ready with reassurance – for a price.

The chapter of the Holy Qur'an that deals with this question is *Al Muminun*, which means The Believer. There is no accident in the organization of the Holy Qur'an. Allah is telling us what qualities He expects from the believers. Without these qualities, we cannot attain the status of a true believer. For example, Allah says: "And He it is Who has created for you ears and eyes, and hearts; but little thanks do you give." Being ungrateful can lead us astray. We want the straight path, we say, but we have in us a tendency to be ungrateful, so we have to keep it in check.

When someone dies who is dear to us, no matter how reluctant we are, we have to move on. Grateful people thank their neighbor for a borrowed cup of sugar, so the only option for grateful people is to thank Allah for sending us this loved one in the first place. To think that one can only love one person in the whole world, filled with billions of people, is sheer romanticism. It does not serve one's life in any practical sense. It just makes a good story.

When I searched the internet for psychics, with the assumption that people want to contact a departed loved one, I was surprised to get 71,800 hits. That does not include the phone book or all the people who decide to put a sign on their front lawn, claiming that they can reach the dead.

The question is who is in charge? If Allah is in charge, we must pray to Him to hear news of our loved ones. He is the one who has the key to the door. But if we think we can use a psychic to get around the fact that the veil separates us from our loved ones for ever, we are associating partners with

Submission to the Lord of all the Worlds holds uncountable blessings. In my process, I keep reminding myself that "My person does not belong to me; I now have to abide by all injunctions of Almighty Allah." But then, Allah provided rewards when I had previously expected only sacrifices.



Allah, instead of developing *sabr* (patience) and gratitude to our Creator for the time we had with that loved one. Allah wants us to get closer to Him. True dreams, visions and revelations only have one purpose – to give us that contact with Him which our hearts crave.

In my own experience I did not have any such clarity about the rules Allah lays down. Before my father died, I had a cold and I was not permitted to see him at the hospital. I was in my bedroom in Toronto and my father was in Sarnia when I suddenly saw my dead relatives coming down. That experience made me take my father's illness more seriously. We did not expect death, but when he did die, I knew that my Creator had warned me in advance. When I finally did get to go home to visit my father, I had a sudden stomach ache in the evening that was so severe I did not go to school the next day. My father died the next morning, so I received the call from the hospital. I knew what it was when the phone started ringing. The sweetest feeling in the midst of the pain of a death is the comfort of Allah.

After my father's death, I traveled to Scotland to see his country. On the Isle of Mull, I dreamed that my father came to the gate of heaven and told me that he would meet each one of the family members at the door of heaven when we died. He told me to tell everyone in the family. I did what I was told. My mother died six weeks after I had that dream. So, Allah comforts those who put their trust in Him.

Our real reason d'etre (reason to be) is to worship Allah. I had a belief at one time that I could contact the dead, like dialing a phone, but Allah made it abundantly clear who was in charge. I had a dream that an angel told my father that he could come to our house and watch us, but he was not allowed to say anything to us. I saw him floating there and I took comfort from that dream. Allah is the Gracious, the Merciful.

Each time I have an experience, I learn a different lesson. Since we know that Allah's attributes are not limited to the ninety nine names we learn in Islam, surely the lessons we can learn are limitless, even in this world.

As a non-Muslim, I experienced "deja vu" many times, true dreams, a comforting presence and heard voices of people when no one was there. As a Muslim, however, I received greater clarity. I understood the underlying purpose of the Creator so the dreams changed from black and white to full color with the best reception. What my mind could not comprehend was Allah's knowledge of the unseen.

In August, 1993, I was driving down a road in Thedford, Ontario (Canada), when I saw my father and my aunt flying down at me. I had to pull over to the side of the road because I was blinded by tears. They told me that my mother would die on Thanksgiving weekend. But they did not say what year. Two years later, my sister phoned me and said: "Mom doesn't sound right." It was Thanksgiving weekend. She had children and she could not leave them, so I went home by bus from Toronto to London (Canada). I waited at a donut shop all night until a friend could take me home. It was the loneliest night of my life because I did not know if my mother would be alive or dead when I arrived. But I kept telling myself she had to be alive or there would not be any point in the communication.

I was the last one in my family to speak to my mother. I made her breakfast and drove her to the hospital. She had had a stroke. I do not know what other people want from life, but it was all-important for me to be with my mother, especially since she lived alone. When my mother was in a coma, my school wanted to know when I would be returning. I was growing so certain of my ability to talk to my Creator that I finally told my sister I was going to do my prayers and ask how long it would be. I did my prayers in the hospital room and with a very light tone, I heard an angel say "A week is but a spot of time." It felt like forever, but a week later when my mother died, it suddenly felt very short.

Can we contact our dear departed loved ones? Yes, but only by the permission of the one who holds us in His hands. But we should not be narrow minded. This also means that the dead can contact us, but only by His permission. It makes sense to add that the more righteous the person is the more likely Allah will accept the request.

Submission to the Lord of all the Worlds holds uncountable blessings. In my process, I keep reminding myself that "My person does not belong to me; I now have to abide by all injunctions of Almighty Allah." But then, Allah provided rewards when I had previously expected only sacrifices.

After my mother's death, I became very bold. I decided to pray for a present for my sister Janet, in Calgary, that I could not give her. I told her that I was praying for something on her birthday and she should just let me know if she received it. After we lost both parents the pain seemed unbearable. I wanted her to understand that Ahmadiyyat was true because I could get my prayer answered. She rang me on her birthday to let me know that she had received her present. She said that before dawn, at Fajr, she heard a chorus of voices singing "Happy Birthday" to her. She recognized my mother, my father and our uncle and aunt singing, who had all passed away. I enjoyed that present maybe even more than my sister because my faith and certainty were rewarded.

Allah can comfort us. The question is whether we are able to challenge our imaginations to the limit to achieve that closeness to Him. ◆

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Soul in the Likeness of Allah

By Bilal Rana

The outer world is the real make-believe
The literal truth is actually the universe inside you.
Why do you obsess about guides
When the real Teacher is in you?
That true sense-ability which picks up the scent of truth
Is given to all for free!
Shatter the chains binding you to this world!
For if you have not done so in this life why would they cease to exist in the next?
Do you actually think that evil ghouls will smash them for you?
Can the dead rally the dead?
Awaken now!
For if you are fast sleep here why do think you will ever wake up?
There is no salvation which does not know paradise on earth
The real afterlife begins now.
Do you wish to know the soul?
Inside the vast ocean, lies all its creation, billions of water droplets
And yet, inside each single drop is all the deep ocean, and all the oceans of the earth.
Within a mere iota - a revolving universe, a thousand marvels
And the radiance of a hundred million stars!
Dear friend, if you want to know the truth, I will tell it to you:
The Call of the Eternally Besought that a believer hears is heard inside
What I am speaking of goes back to the earliest of species
A consciousness so timeless it cannot be eradicated
As the leaf floats on the wind so soar we on the infinite space of the Divine
The fetal soul a drop of fluid becomes a universe embarking on a endless journey.
The destination is in the experience, on the edge of the ever-unfolding scroll
Never there yet never far
From the Elusive One.
Like a nut that becomes a great oak tree so expands the soul
Though the nut is tiny, inside it is the mighty oak itself - its roots, its branches and its shade.
In each sailing vessel burns a flame which no earthly water can put out
In it lies a candle lit by the Opener of Hearts.
Whether a flicker or a flame in each and all
The luminous aura of Eternity can be found.
You are a soul-mirror reflecting the Everlasting Refuge.
You must polish it with your tears to clearly reflect some of His Brilliance
A choir sings a melody but earthly ears hear it not
Strings are harped by a hand no one can see and drums are beating an ecstatic tenor.
For one and all, but are you listening?
With every pious thought and deed
The secret inside you in a parallel world grows an otherworldly eye to behold truths, a new limb to employ to good use
If you only knew! Ah, If you only knew!
Under the penitent one's ruffled garb, beneath his hungry stomach
Lies a luxurious feast and a silken cloak.
Many came and died searching for the door to the Irresistible
When ultimately the knob to turn was hidden in them -
No one will turn that knob for you!

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Signs of Allah

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water that Allah send down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth are indeed Signs for the people who understand" (2:165)

Part II

By Imam Mubasher Ahmad

Signs as Miracles and Wonders

The Holy Qur'an is replete with references to Signs of Allah as miracles and wonders that appeared to lead men to God. God's Prophets and Messengers performed them. For example, the Qur'an declares:

We sent Moses with our Signs to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they rejected them. Behold, then, what was the end of those who created disorder! (7:104); (10:76). *And of a truth We gave Moses nine manifest signs* (17:102); (27:13, 14); (11:97); *and We did send Moses with Our Signs, saying, 'Bring forth your people from every kind of darkness into light, and remind them of the days of Allah.' Surely, therein are Signs for every patient and thankful person* (14:6).

Jesus[as] was also sent to the House of Israel with miracles. Allah directed him to say to the Israelites:

'I come to you with a Sign from your Lord, which is, that I will fashion out for you a creation out of clay after the manner of a bird, then I will breathe into it a new spirit and it will become a soaring being by the command of Allah; and I will heal the night-blind and the leprous, and I will quicken the dead, by the command of Allah; and I will announce to you what you will eat and what you will store up in your houses. Surely, therein is a Sign for you, if you be believers' (3:50).

Obviously, here Jesus[as] is speaking in symbolic language. He was given the Sign to transform his humble and poor disciples into saints - soaring high in lofty regions of spirituality. He cleansed them of many moral impurities, healed them of spiritual blindness and revived them from dead to forge a living connection with God Almighty. The important point to note is that all such Signs and wonders are performed by a Prophet *'by the command of Allah.'* Thus, in reality, it is the power and authority of the Divine presence working behind the Signs.

Signs in the Creation

The Holy Qur'an emphatically declares that cosmos is replete with the Signs that lead to an awe-inspiring recognition of the Glorious God.

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and day, and in the ships which sail in the sea with that which profits men, and in the water that Allah send down from the sky and quickens therewith the earth after its death and scatters therein all kinds of beasts, and in the change of the winds, and the clouds pressed into service between the heaven and the earth are indeed Signs for the people who understand" (2:165).

The significance of these Signs becomes evident to men of understanding "who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth. They come to the conclusion that their Lord has not created all this in vain" (3: 191, 192).

"Verily, it is Allah Who causes the grain and the date-stone to sprout. He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living. That is Allah; wherefore, then, are you turned back? He causes the break of the day; and He made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for reckoning time. That is the decree of the Mighty, the Wise. And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you may follow the right direction with their help amid the deep darkness of the land and the sea. We have explained the Signs in detail for a people who possess knowledge. And He it is Who has produced you from a single soul and there is for you a home and a lodging. We

have explained the Signs in detail for a people who understand" (6:96-99).

Diverse aspects of natural phenomenon are named in great detail as Signs to prove that God the Creator exists and is in full control over all His creation. In this category, several Signs are mentioned in the Qur'an inviting us to study them seriously and draw conclusion that a Benevolent, Wise and All-Powerful Creator is worthy of our worship. The following are some of the natural Signs:

"Plains, mountains and rivers (13:4),(21:32); *diverse tracts adjoining one another* (13:5); *winds as bearers of glad tidings* (13:47); *lightening and rain* (30:25); *dead land revived with water descending down from the clouds* (57:18) — *And the dead earth is a Sign for them: We quicken it and bring forth there-from grain, gardens of date-palms and grapes, and We have caused springs to gush forth therein* (36:34, 35); *crops and fruits of all kind* (6:100); *trees and pastures* (16:11); *things growing out of the earth in varying colors* (16:14); *various kinds of vegetation* (20:54, 55); *gardens of vines, corn-fields, and date-palms, growing together from one root and others not so growing, being watered with the same water and yet some of them excelling others in fruits* (13:5); *intoxicating drinks and wholesome fruits* (16:68); *all sorts of animals* (42:30); *domesticated animals — the cattle, horses, mules and asses* (16:6-9); *honeybees* (16:69); *birds* (16:80); *sea, fish and pearls* (16:15); *creation of the universe from a closed up mass* (21:31); *water as the source of all forms of life* (21:31); *creation of humans from dust (elements of the earth) and passing through evolutionary stages* (30:21); *creation of the two opposite sexes* (13:4); *creating of spouses to find peace of mind, and putting the emotions of love and tenderness in between them* (30:22); *procreation from an insignificant drop of fluid* (16:5); *diversity of tongues and colors among human races* (30:23); *sleep and death* (39:43)."



"And how many a Sign is there in the heavens and the earth, which they pass by, turning away from it."
(12:106)

Commenting on the situation that there are many who ignore the Signs of Allah as evidence of a Creator, the Holy Qur'an declares:

"And how many a Sign is there in the heavens and the earth, which they pass by, turning away from it (12:106)."

Asking for Signs

The Holy Qur'an details the skeptical attitude of those who remain determined to reject the truth. They keep on asking for more signs:

"And those who have no knowledge say, 'Why does not Allah speak to us, or a Sign come to us?' Even thus, as they now speak, spoke those (who were) before them. Their hearts are all alike. We have made clear the Signs for a people who firmly believe. We have sent you with the Truth, and as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner. And you will not be questioned about the inmates of Hell (2:119-120). *Nay, they say, "These are but confused dreams; nay, he has forged it; nay, he is but a poet. Let him them bring us a Sign just as the former Prophets were sent with Signs.'* (21:6)."

The rejecters do not hesitate demanding for some peculiar Signs, such as asking the Prophet to dig a deep channel into the earth or to clime up a ladder unto heaven (6:37) or to cause pieces of sky to fall down on them (26:188). Demanding new Signs seems to be an old habit of the disbelievers. For example, in the New Testament we read Jesus being asked to show a Sign:

"The Pharisees also with Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but ye can not discern the signs of the time? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed (Math.16:1); (Mark 8:11); (Luke 11:29). (John 2:18)."

To accede to the demand of showing more Signs would be a futile exercise. God seldom shows Signs on demand. Asking for a fresh Signs implies that the Signs already shown were not enough and did not establish the Prophet's truth. Therefore, God requires the disbelievers to reflect on the past Signs and draw lessons.

"And they say, 'Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?' Has there not come to them the clear evidence what is contained in the former Book? (20:134)."

Rejection of God's Signs

Denial of fresh Signs remained a serious flaw for generation after generation of disbelievers. The Holy Qur'an not only identifies the reasons of disbelief, but also

makes clear the drastic moral and spiritual consequences of such a denial of truth. The Five Volume *English Translation and Commentary* published under the auspices of Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad[ra] comments: "The opponents of God's Prophets are in the habit of rejecting their claims on the basis of mere hearsay and make belief. The result of such a hasty rejection is that the hearts of rejecters become sealed and they become deprived of the power to understand the arguments and Signs which God shows to establish the truth of His Messengers…the hearts are sealed only when disbelievers refuse to make use of their God-given power of reasoning and understanding." (Vol. II, p.813.)



***"Then Adam learnt from his Lord certain words (of prayer). So He turned towards him with mercy. Surely, He is oft-Returning (with compassion, and is) Merciful. We said: Go forth, all of you, from here. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve. But they who will disbelieve and treat our Signs as lies, these shall be the inmates of Fire; therein shall they abide."* (2:38-40)**

The Holy Qur'an points out that a clear warning was given to mankind from the very beginning that the rejecters of God's Signs would be severely punished:

"Then Adam learnt from his Lord certain words (of prayer). So He turned towards him with mercy. Surely, He is oft-Returning (with compassion, and is) Merciful. We said: Go forth, all of you, from here. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoso shall follow My guidance, on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve. But they who will disbelieve and treat our Signs as lies, these shall be the inmates of Fire; therein shall they abide (2:38-40)."

Unbelievers who cry lies to God's Signs are referred to at numerous places in the Holy Qur'an:

"Signs and Warners avail not a people who will not believe (10:102). *Surely, those who deviate (from the right path) with respect to Our Signs are not hidden from Us. Is he, then, who is cast into the Fire better or he who is comes out safe on the day of Resurrection?* (41:41). The Holy Qur'an explains by telling us: *And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or gives the lie to His Signs? Surely, the unjust shall not prosper* (6:21). *Evil is the case of the people who treat Our Signs as lies. And it was their own souls that they wronged* (7:178); *And those who reject Our Signs; We will draw them to destruction step by step in a manner which they do not know* (7:183). *Those who took their religion for a pastime and sport, and whom the life of the world beguiled, this day, then, shall We forget them as they forgot the meeting of this day of theirs, and as they used to deny Our Signs* (7:52); *Those who dispute concerning the Signs of Allah without any authority having come to them; grievously hateful is this in the sight of Allah and in the sight of those who believe. Thus does Allah seal up the heart of every arrogant, haughty person* (40:36). *They rejected the Signs of their Lord so We destroyed them for their sins. And We drowned the People of the Pharaoh, for they were all wrong-doers* (8:55). *We cut off the last remnant of those who rejected Our Signs* (7:73); *their works are in vain* (7:148); *those who disbelieve in the Signs of Allah, these it is who are the losers* (39:64); *and they ruin none but their own selves; only they perceive not* (6:27): *(they) incurred the wrath of God* (2:61); (they were given) *"severe punishment"(*3:12); *a painful punishment*(3:21),(34:39); *smitten with wretchedness* (3:112); *the inmates of Hell* (5:86), (17:99); (22:52),(22:73), (39:72) (57: 20) (18:107);. *Those who reject Our Signs are deaf and dumb* (6:40). *Surely, humiliation before Allah and a severe punishment shall smite the offenders because of their plotting* (6:125), (22:58). *Those who dispute concerning the Signs of Allah without any authority having come to them? There is nothing in their breasts but a feeling of greatness which they will never attain. So, seek refuge in Allah. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing* (40:57). *That is the reward of the enemies of Allah, the Fire. For them there will be an abiding home therein as requital because they used to deny Our Signs* (41:29). *Those who oppose Allah and His Messengers will surely be abased as those who before them were abased; and We have already sent down clear Signs. And the disbelievers have a painful punishment* (58:6). *Woe, on that day, unto those who reject, who deny the Day of Judgment; and none denies it save every sinful transgressor, who, when Our Signs are recited unto him, says: "Fables of the ancients!" Nay, but that which they have earned has rusted their hearts. Nay, they will surely be debarred from seeing their Lord on that day. Then, verily, they*

will burn in Hell. Then it will be said to them, "this is what you used to reject." (83:11-18). *Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the Signs of Allah, and mocked at them* (30:11)."

Signs of Allah Will Never Cease to Come

Commenting on the verse *'And nothing could hinder Us from sending Signs, except that the former people rejected them'* (17:60), the editors of the Five Volume English Translation and Commentary write: "This verse beautifully states that heavenly Signs will never cease to appear. (It) proceeds to refute and demolish the only possible objection against the appearance of the heavenly Signs. The objection is: When the people to whom the Signs were first shown did not profit by them, where was the warrant that their successors would do so? The arguments given to this objection are: (a) If the rejection of heavenly Signs had been a reasonable ground, no Prophet after the very first Prophet Adam would have appeared. But this did not happen and fresh Prophets continued to appear in all ages and fresh signs continued to be shown at their hands, which showed that the rejection of the Signs never proved a barrier in the way of appearance of new Signs; (b) Prophets are sent in the world in order to warn wrong-doers of their aggressions and iniquities and of the impending divine punishment in consequence of those iniquities. Any such punishment without a previous warning and without showing Signs would be contrary to divine mercy." (Vol. III, pp. 1444-1445).

Those who believe in the Signs of Allah

O children of Adam! If Messengers come to you from among yourselves, rehearsing My Signs unto you, then whoso shall fear God and do good deeds, on them shall come no fear nor shall they grieve (7:36). Some of the rewards bestowed upon those who accept the Signs of Allah are: *Mercy and forgiveness* (6:54); *steadfastness, resignation in God's will* (7:127); *fear of God, holding Him in reverence* (23:59); *True believers are only those whose hearts tremble when the name of Allah is mentioned, and when His Signs are recited to them they increase their faith, and who put their trust in their Lord. Who observe prayer and spend out of that which We have provided for them. These it is who are true believers. They have grades of ranks with their Lord, as well as forgiveness and an honorable provision* (8:3-4). *These are the people on whom Allah bestowed His blessings from among the Prophets, of the posterity of Adam, and of those whom We carried in the Ark with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel; and they are those whom We guided and chose. When the Signs of Gracious God were recited unto them, they fell down, prostrating themselves before God and weeping* (19:59). *And We made among them leaders, who guided others by Our command, while they themselves were steadfast and had firm faith in Our Signs* (32:25). *O My servants, there is no fear for you this day, nor shall you grieve; (you) believed in Our Signs and submitted. Enter you the Garden, you and your wives, honored and happy* (43:69-71).

The Holy Qur'an narrates many earthly and heavenly Signs as indicators for recognizing the Latter Days when the Second Coming of the Messiah and the final triumph of Islam are predicted to take place.

Signs of the Latter Days

The Holy Qur'an narrates many earthly and heavenly Signs as indicators for recognizing the Latter Days when the Second Coming of the Messiah and the final triumph of Islam are predicted to take place. The Holy Qur'an reinforces the Signs documented in some previous Scriptures. In the New Testament, for example, some of Signs were foretold by Jesus about the coming of the Son of man:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other (Matt. 24:30, 31). *And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven* (Luke 21:11)."

In the Holy Qur'an, similar and additional Signs are given. For example, in *Sura Al-Takwir*, Chapter 81, the following Signs are mentioned: Special eclipses of the sun and the moon; religious leaders (*the stars*) becoming corrupt and losing their spiritual light; the mountains blown away and passages made through them; replacement of camels by better and swifter means of transportation; animals gathered together; primitive people settles in organized colonies; flow of rivers diverted and linked through canals; large battles-ships fighting in open seas; sea-waters getting ablaze with fire; oceans joined together; mass immigrations of rural populations towards urban areas; interaction and intercommunication becoming fast; vast and rapid circulation of printed material; amazing progress in sciences and technology; global wars and widespread natural catastrophes. Then, after a long moral decline, the reemergence of Islam shall occur. The spiritual darkness shall be dispelled and a brilliant new day shall dawn on Islam through the Promised Messiah – appearing from the East.

"And say: 'All praise belongs to Allah; He will soon show you His signs, and you will know them.' And your Lord is no unaware of what you do (27:94); *Soon We will show them Our Signs in all parts of the earth, and among their own people until it becomes manifest to them that it is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is Witness over all things?"* (41:54)

*** Note:** Most of the Qur'anic quotations are taken from the English translation by Maulwi Sher Ali, published by Islam International Publications Limited. The Suras and Verse numbers are indicated in parentheses. For example, (7:175) indicates Chapter 7 of the Qur'an and Verse number 175. The verse numbering includes "In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful" – the verse that begins nearly every Sura of the Qur'an – as the first verse.◆

Al Wassay and the Expanding Universe



The Holy Qur'an invites mankind to ponder on the universe that He has created. The Qur'an urges us to reflect on the Laws of Nature — with examples drawn from cosmology, physics, biology and medicine — as signs for all men. For example the Glorious Qur'an says, "Do they not then look at the camel, how it is created? And at the heaven, how it is raised high?

Dr. Zia H. Shah and Dr. Lutfur Rehman

He is Allah, the creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (Al Hashr 59:25).

And the heaven We built with our own powers and indeed We go on expanding it. (Al Dhariyat 51:48).

The similitude of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies it further for whomsoever He pleases and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing. (Al Baqarah 2:262)

The Holy Qur'an invites mankind to ponder on the universe that He has created. The Qur'an urges us to reflect on the Laws of Nature — with examples drawn from cosmology, physics, biology and medicine — as signs for all men. For example the Glorious Qur'an says, "Do they not then look at the camel, how it is created? And at the heaven, how it is raised high? And at the mountains how they are rooted, and at the earth how it is outspread?" (Al-Ghashiyah 88:18-21) In Sura Rahman He says, "The Gracious God. He taught the Qur'an. He created man, And taught him plain speech. The sun and the moon run their courses according to a fixed reckoning. And the stem less plants and the trees humbly submit to His Will. And the heaven He has raised high and set up the measure. (Al Rahman 55:2-8)

The earth on which we live is one of nine planets of a rather mediocre sun when we compare it with what else is out there. All the planets circle around the sun while at the same time continually spinning on their axes. Our sun around which these nine planets are moving belongs to a galaxy made up of 100 billion other suns; the nearest of these suns is more than four light years away and the most distant 100,000 or more light years. A light year is the distance light travels in a year at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. The galaxy to which the nine planets and our sun belongs is about 100,000 light years in diameter and viewed from a remote point in space would appear to be a spiral nebula, much like the pictures of spiral nebulae to be seen at any planetarium.

Edwin Powell Hubble (1889-1953) discovered in 1922–24 that not all nebulae in the sky are part of our galaxy called the Milky Way Galaxy. He found that certain nebulae contain stars called Cepheid variables. By studying their relative distances, apparent magnitude, and absolute magnitude, Hubble determined that these Cepheids are several hundred thousand light-years away and thus outside the Milky Way system, and that the nebulae in which they are located are actually galaxies distinct from the Milky Way.

Hubble's discovery forced astronomers to revise their ideas about the universe or the cosmos.

Soon after discovering the existence of these external galaxies, Hubble undertook the task of classifying them according to their shapes and exploring their stellar contents and brightness patterns. In studying the galaxies, Hubble made his second remarkable discovery—namely, that these galaxies are apparently receding from the Milky Way and that the further away they are, the faster they are receding. The implications of this discovery were immense. The universe, long considered static, was expanding, and, even more remarkably, as Hubble discovered in 1929, the universe was expanding in such a way that the ratio of the speed of the galaxies to their distance is a constant now called Hubble's constant.

The nearest galaxy to our own galaxy is about 150 million light years away. The most distant is perhaps ten billion light years away. Modern astronomy can locate a billion or more galaxies, each containing billions of flaming suns. Sir James Jeans has written, "The number of stars in the Universe is practically like the number of grains of sand on all the seashores of the world." The present day thought among the experts in cosmology is that there are perhaps more stars than sand particles on all the seashores of the world. When we combine this fact with the observation that each star on the average is approximately a billion times the volume of the earth, we can be only flabbergasted at the expanse of the cosmos.

The scientists have been able to make these discoveries by using very sophisticated and advanced equipments. In the recent past they came up with a novel idea and implemented it in the calendar year 2006. They created a very large virtual telescope by combining different telescopes. This gives a telescope with a virtual diameter of 5,000 miles. The astronomers used the Very Long Baseline Array, taking observations from several telescopes stretching from Hawaii to the Virgin Islands. With the help of this virtual telescope they have measured the distance to the nearest spiral arm (astronomical name: W3OH) and it turns out to be about 36,000,000,000,000,000 miles.

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV, wrote in his book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*:

"At the time the Holy Qur'an was revealed, the human understanding of the nature of the cosmos and the movement or the stillness of the heavenly bodies was extremely primitive and obscure. This is no longer the case, as our knowledge of the universe has considerably advanced and expanded by the present age.

Some of the theories relating to the creation of the universe have been verified as facts, whereas some others are still being explored. The concept of the expanding universe belongs to the former category, and has been universally accepted by the scientific community as 'fact'. This discovery was first made by Edwin Hubble in the 1920s. Yet some thirteen centuries before this, it was clearly mentioned in the Qur'an in Sura Dhariyat:

And the heaven We built with *Our own* powers (*aydin*) and indeed We go on expanding it (*musi'un*).

It should be remembered that the concept of the continuous expansion of the universe is exclusive to the Qur'an. No other Divine scriptures even remotely hint at it."[1]

Now we turn from the magnitude of the Cosmos to the minute subatomic level which is the stage of Quantum Physics. All matter is composed of infinitesimal small particles. Matter is composed of millions and millions of small molecules. A molecule consists of two or more atoms, and an atom has one or more electrons revolving around a nucleus of one or more protons. These billions of stars, our sun, the earth and all material bodies as well as the atoms of which they are composed, are all made of the similar smaller particles. Science describes this basic element as energy. It is known that atoms are miniature solar systems with electrons spinning at tremendous speeds around a nucleus of pro-tons. The detail and organization are mind boggling even at this quantum level. Talking at the Nobel Banquet on December 10, 1979, Doctor Abdus Salam quoted from the Holy Qur'an from Sura Mulk:

Allah has created seven heavens in harmony. No incongruity can you see in the creation of the Gracious God. Then look again. Do you see any flaw? Aye, look again, and yet again, your sight will only return to you dazzled and fatigued, having seen no incongruity. (Al Mulk, 67:4-5).

Having quoted the verse he said: "This in effect is the faith of all physicists, the deeper we seek, the more is our wonder excited, the more is the dazzlement of our gaze."[2]

The scientists are now beginning to find that there is a unity in the building blocks at the subatomic level despite the numerous types of subatomic particles that are now known when we look at level higher then the most basic. This concept is described in the string theory. According to the string theory, the subatomic particles may behave as tiny one-dimensional "string like" entities rather than the more conventional approach in which they are modeled as zero-dimensional point particles. The theory envisions that a string undergoing a particular mode of vibration corresponds to a particle with definite properties such as mass and charge. This theory may have the potential to incorporate all four of nature's forces—gravity, electromagnetism, strong force, and weak force—and all types of matter in a single quantum mechanical framework, suggesting that it might be the long-sought unified field theory, where all mass and all forms of energy have their origin from one source. There is an oneness in the physical world be it the study of the inanimate or the animal and the plant kingdom that points to One Creator and one unifying principle. In the words of the Glorious Qur'an:

If there had been in the heavens and the earth other gods besides Allah, then surely both would have gone to ruin. Glorified then be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, far above what they attribute to Him. (Al Anbiyya 21:23).

Now visualize the Cosmos as far as one can conceive it. It is of a magnitude that is overwhelming and of subatomic minuteness that is completely inconceivable. All the parts are made of the same thing. They are all in unceasing activity and all activities are so ordered that they form a very well organized complete universe.

Allah has created seven heavens in harmony. No incongruity can you see in the creation of the Gracious God. Then look again. Do you see any flaw? Aye, look again, and yet again, your sight will only return to you dazzled and fatigued, having seen no incongruity. (Al Mulk, 67:4-5)

The mass is convertible to energy and different forms of energy are convertible to each other. For example, Dr. Abdus Salam proposed the electroweak theory, which explains the unity of the weak nuclear force and electromagnetism. He was the co-recipient with Steven Weinberg and Sheldon Lee Glashow of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Physics for this work.



The late Dr. Abdus Salam

The mass is convertible to energy and different forms of energy are convertible to each other. For example, Dr. Abdus Salam proposed the electroweak theory, which explains the unity of the weak nuclear force and electromagnetism. He was the co recipient with Steven Weinberg and Sheldon Lee Glashow of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Physics for this work.

The conversion of mass to energy is described by the equation worked out by Einstein, namely $E = mc^2$. This relationship or equation is now re-garded as the foundation of theoretical physics and modern tech-nology, and thanks to the present media, this equation has risen to the level of common knowledge. Here 'E' is the energy and 'm' is the mass and 'c' is the speed of light. As an inference from this equation, even a small amount of mass has a very large energy, given the extremely high speed of light. Every gram of matter (of any kind) has stored within it the equivalent of 25,000,000 kilowatt hours of energy.

In other words, the Cosmos, or every material thing in it, is made of energy. Enough energy is in the atoms of a cup of water to light a large city for a year. With this paradigm, when we examine the total energy in the universe, the amount is mind boggling. Such huge amount of energy did not come from "nothingness" or "nowhere." The source of cosmic energy is outside the confines of the physical Universe. Certainly there was no energy in the physical Universe prior to its cre-ation. There was emptiness or hollowness, or was there? How could there be anything without a source without a creator? Allah is the creator of all this energy, and all that proceeded from that energy. He is the Alpha and the Omega. According to the Holy Qur'an, "He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is." (Al-Baqarah 2:118). He is the First Cause of all causes.

The universe is not dead and did not come from nothingness. Therefore, there is an Intelligence there, and it is all pervading and overwhelming. At least one purpose, possibly the major or the only purpose of human life, is to achieve harmony with that Intelligence. Striving in the right direction for harmony and accord with that Intelligence ought to be a source of peace for the human mind and soul. It is desirable to affect that accord. The human race, then, is not alone in the universe. For untold ages man has felt an awareness of that Intelligence. Belief in it is the one point where all monotheistic re-ligions agree. It has been called by many names. Many call it Allah or God. He has numerous attributes. He is Allah, the creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (Al Hashr 59:25) He is also *Al Wassay*, the one who expands the universe, *Al Raheem* or *Al Sameeh*, who listens to the prayers, and *Al Razak*, who is Provident and provides provisions.

As we reflect on the attribute of God, *Al Wassay*, and then direct our attention towards the attribute *Al Raheem* and *Al Razak*, our horizons are expanded. In Sura Baqarah, we read:

The similitude of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies it further for whomsoever He pleases and Allah is Bountiful, All-Knowing. (Al Baqarah 2:262).

In this analogy God has promised a multiple of 700 times when He returns a favor ans says that He may deliver much more if He so pleases. The testimony that we see in the physical world at an atomic level is that God yields an amazing multiple of speed of light squared for yield of energy from mass, i.e., $E= mc^2$. If such can be the return in the physical world, do we see any evidence of such yield in the spiritual world? Yes, indeed we do! We see that in the life history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him) and the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him). The Promised Messiah, giving testimony about his life, says in a verse:

"God's blessings transformed a drop of water into a river. Such was the measure of His blessings on me!"

God not only promises expansion in the financial means of one who spends in His way, but also promises peace of mind and serenity in return. We read:

Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve. (Al Baqarah 2:275.)

We need to imprint the picture of expanding universe; the growing corn field and the massive energy trapped in small amount of mass ($E= mc^2$) in our minds and reflect on them from time to time. This will lead us to better understand of the attributes *Al Wassay* and *Al Razak* and will create generosity of spirit. This could result in a lasting and profound effect on our souls, and we would acquire the mindset of abundance rather than that of miserliness or greed. May the blessings of Allah be with all of us.

(Endnotes)

[1] Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad
. Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth
. Islam International Publications Limited, 1998, p.303.

[2] Al Nahl
, Special Issue on Dr. Abdus Salam, Bait-ul-Wahid, Fall 1997, p.80.

The Muslim Sunrise Q&A

1 What is a Mujaddid?

A Mujaddid is a person who renews or renovates the religion. According to a Hadith (recorded saying) of the Holy Prophet, which has been recorded by Abu Da'ood, renovators will appear during every century of Islam:

"Verily, God shall raise for this community, at the beginning of every century, one who will renovate for it its religion."

A list of various "Renovators" who have appeared during the past fourteen hundred years is given below. These mujaddideen were the most outstanding and saintly scholars of their time and did much to reform the religion of Islam, of their day.

In this list, only one Mujaddid is given for each century. Many Muslims, however, recognize more than one Mujaddid for some centuries. But for the Fourteenth Century of Islam, which ended in the year 1980 A.D., no one other than Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian has ever been recognized as a Mujaddid.

1st Omar bin Abdul Aziz (717 – 720)
2nd Ahmad bin Hanbal (780 – 855)
3rd Abul Hasan Ashari (873 – 935)
4th Abu Bakr Baqlani (? – 1013)
5th Al Ghazali (1058 – 1111)
6th Abdul Qadir Jilanee (1077 – 1166)
7th Ibne Taymiyya (1263 – 1328)
8th Ibne Hajar Asqalani (1372 – 1449)
9th Jalal-ud-Deen Sayutee
10th Muhammad Tahir Gujratee
11th Ahmad Sirhindi (1564 – 1624)
12th Shah Wali Ullah (1702 – 1762)
13th Ahmad Brelwi (1786 – 1831)
14th Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835 – 1908)

2 Where is Prophet Muhammad[sa] buried?

The blessed founder of Islam passed away in the year 632 AD, in the city known as Medina-tun Nabi (City of the Prophet), Medina for short. Specifically, he breathed his last in his wife Aisha's[ra] chamber, where a grave was dug for him, and where he was buried. This small home was built adjacent to *Masjid-e-Nabwi* or the Prophet's Mosque, which has since been exponentially expanded to encompass the chamber. Along with him, his first two successors and possibly greatest companions, Abu Bakr[ra] and Umar[ra] are buried.

3 How many religions exist in the world today?

There are about ten *major* religions in the world today. In alphabetical order, these are: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. Although Sikhism is not considered a major religion or a revealed faith, it is included in this list for the benefit of the reader. Of these religions, only three are missionary religions: Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Lastly, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Zoroastrianism are categorized as religions of Prophecy, whereas the rest are categorized as religions of Wisdom.

4 What is Sikhism?

The Sikh movement started in India as a small group of devoted disciples who gathered around the saintly person of Baba Nanak. Born in 1469 AD to a Hindu family, Baba Nanak was disillusioned with by the Hindu caste system, the power of the Brahmin priests, and the custom of "sati" in which the widows were burned on the funeral pyre of their husbands. There is considerable evidence in historical records that Baba Nanak embraced Islam, used to perform the Islamic rituals and undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca. These records also point to the fact that Baba Nanak did not found any new religion. Over the years his disciples and successors, however, did form a new identity and a religion for themselves.

Formal succession lasted 169 years, with the final *Guru* (teacher) Gobind Singh (1666-1708) telling his community, on his deathbed, no more human Gurus will appear and that their sacred scriptures, the Granth, would be their Guru.

The most important belief of the Sikh religion concerns the Unity of God. The religion also teaches man can become one with God only by walking on the path of the Gurus. The sacred book, Guru Granth, can lead followers to find God and salvation. Salvation results with a love-union with God.

While Sikhs today claim that Baba Nanak founded their faith, historical records prove Baba Nanak was raised a Hindu but later accepted Islam. Many of the "shabads" of the Granth are simply Gurmukhi translations of Qur'anic verses. The concept of God is presented in the Granth is exactly the same as given in the Qur'an. Lastly, both of Baba Nanak's most precious and famous possessions – his cloak and pocket book – are saturated with Qur'anic inscription and the Qur'an itself. It is for this reason that many western scholars of religion do not regard Sikhism as an independent religion, but an offshoot of Islam.

Do you have a question about Islam? About religion? About God?

Email us your questions today, to:

MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us

News, Views and Reviews: **Press Publications**

Muslim Sunrise contributors have been actively engaged in responding to the American press on articles of religious importance. Some samples of their recent published responses are below:

- Commentary, *Oshkosh Northwestern*, September 24, 2006
- Letter to the Editor, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 24, 2006
- Commentary, *The Broadside* (George Mason University), September 25, 2006
- Editorial, *Kalamazoo Gazette*, November 12, 2006

Oshkosh Northwestern

"Qur'an: Muslims invite others to Islam through rational dialogue, not force"

Saad Ahmad

September 24, 2006

Pope Benedict XVI in his recent lecture reflected upon the importance of reason in understanding the faith. His point being that domain of rationality and reason extends beyond the limits of empirical evidence. He also mentioned Islam as being fundamentally opposed to rational thought and that its spread was through force. In this short essay I would provide an Islamic perspective. A full version of this essay may be read at http://saadahmad.blogspot.com.

Islam and rationality

The Qur'an fully acknowledges the role of rationality in attainment of the truth. There are about 750 verses in the Qur'an that exhort the believers to study nature, to reflect and make best use of reason and to make scientific enterprise an integral part of a community's life.

Islam's invitation to mankind is primarily on rational grounds and not through force. Verse 2:257 quoted by the pope actually relies on Islam's



Pope Benedict XVI

rationality for its appeal and not on force; and to his point of "later verses somehow changing the message," the Qur'an emphatically rejects such notions and declares that no verse of Qur'an abrogates another verse and there are no inconsistencies (4:83).

It is the duty of every Muslim to invite others to Islam — but through the best of manners (16:126). The Qur'an invites other religions and philosophies to a dialog and to bring forth their proof: (e.g. 2:112, 4:175, 21:25, 27:65, 28:76).

Those who do not study Islam are astonished by its rapid progress. People were drawn towards it because of its rationality and reasonable basis — not because of any fear. This is a real miracle that has been recorded by history unlike the phantom miracles that other religions put forth.

Islamic concept of God

In order to give credence to his faulty premise, the pope attributed this to the Islamic concept of God. Islam's view of God is much different than Christianity. It is more evolved and not bound by trivial ideas like "one is three and three is one." Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion where there is only one God who is unique.

Islam does not put forth an idea that the only way to know God is by believing in some mortal as a part of the godhead; or that god was dead for three days; or that god is so powerless that he had to kill his only begotten son to forgive the sins of mankind. Islam totally rejects a god that would kill an innocent in order to absolve others of their crimes and sins.

The God of Islam is not limited by human imagination, but the ability to recognize Him has been imprinted on the human psyche. He can be recognized through His attributes, but at that same time His attributes do not have a limit. Some of His attributes can be metaphorically compared to human attributes, and some of His attributes can be seen in His creation in a limited capacity. So the being of God is hidden to those who are not willing to find Him, but those who strive would find God everywhere.

Conclusion

It is Christianity and especially the Church that has traditionally opposed rationality and reason. The various episodes of Galileo and Newton are well known. The "rational" tradition of "witch hunts" is an integral part of the Catholic history. Trinity, original sin, resurrection, and rapture all have been challenged by the secular scholars on rational grounds. Today's catholic beliefs are more like the pagan beliefs of that era and far removed from the true and pure teachings of Jesus Christ.

Islam, on the other hand, is well-founded in human psyche. It is a strictly monotheistic religion with evolved concepts of God, revelation, afterlife, and prophethood. Islam's strength is its reasonableness, and it does not need force for its progress.

I hope that the pope takes time to understand Islam and actually read the Qur'an before quoting it. Today the Islamic and Christian civilizations are facing each other in the most unfriendly confrontation ever witnessed in the history. Inter-faith dialogues evolve through mutual understanding and not by maligning the other religion — even if it is done in the guise of "I quote I quote."

Saad Ahmad is an Oshkosh resident, e-mail: saad.ahmad@gmail.com

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Force and religion have situational link

The pope recently quoted the Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 256, "there is no compulsion in religion," and he stated that this was the lowest point of power in Islam. What a beautiful teaching it is by itself. And the sweetest part of it is that it was revealed to the prophet Muhammad at the highest

point of power. Why? Islam had gained ascendancy in Arabia, but God cautioned man to allow for free will. Consequently, the idea of Islam "spread by the sword" must be false. Who is attracted to any religion by force? To the contrary, one Arab mercenary was bent on killing Muhammad with a sword, but when he heard his sister reciting the Qur'an, he fell in love with it and became a Muslim instead.

Allison Knight-Khan
Powder Springs, GA

The Broadside
(George Mason University Student Newspaper)

"The Meaning of Jihad"

Luqman Tahir Mahmood
President of Ahmadiyya Muslim Student Association
September 25, 2006

In light of the Pope's recent remarks, and in the hopes that it will inform those who do not know the true meaning of what is Jihad in Islam — be they Muslims or people of any other faith — I have decided to write this paper in order to evaporate any notion that the Jihad of early Islam has any relation to the Jihad that is being shouted at the head every battle today where Muslims are involved. The issue about Jihad needs clearing up for Muslims especially because it seems that every skirmish is labeled Jihad. This labeling has greatly increased misunderstanding of Islam and has led in some cases to people distrusting this most peaceful religion.

In Islam, there is no compulsion in matters of faith. God clearly states in the Holy Qur'an that right is certainly distinct from wrong, and that people are given free will. No one can be coerced or forced into doing anything, especially when it comes to matters of faith. Faith is a matter of the heart, when people see Muslims praying and prostrating towards God in utter humility, it is solely due to their love of God and the true realization of His existence that they have attained through following Islam and the Holy Founder of Islam (peace and blessings be upon him).

What is Jihad then? The literal meaning is to strive. This can be striving in any sense, whether it is against the passions of oneself, against oppression or against others in defense.

There are types of Jihad that have been given precedence by the Holy Prophet. On returning from an expedition to Tabuk, he is reported to have said that the Muslims are returning from the lower Jihad to the greater Jihad meaning that which was the struggle to purify ones self. This makes it clear as to which Jihad the Holy Prophet considered to be the greater one. So do today's Muslims who advocate Jihad against one and all, even against other Muslims or people of other faiths who look at Islam with a crooked eye, know it better than the Founder of Islam himself?

In the Holy Qur'an, it clearly states that permission to take up arms is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged and Allah, indeed, has power to help them (22:40). Who are those people that have been wronged? Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly, only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and Allah will, surely, help him who helps Him. Allah is, indeed, Powerful, Mighty (22:41).

It becomes apparent that permission to fight is given to Muslims in self-defense. This type of Jihad is to defend against oppression, because in the Holy Qur'an God says that if a people were not there to defend against the oppression of others, then there would be a free reign to commit every sort of injustice in the world. This principle of the Holy Qur'an is founded even in America today. When a person commits a crime according to the laws of the government, the best action to take is to try him and, if convicted, put him in prison for however long the law states. That person is not given freedom to continue his crime, because that freedom may prompt others to do the same.

When this is the law of worldly governments, then what room is left to criticize Islam for its early defensive struggles against its oppressive enemies? The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, states this in regards to the wars that took place in early Islam.

Let it be perfectly clear that there is no compulsion in religion according to Islam. Nowhere in the Holy Qur'an is it justified to kill innocent people just because they profess a belief different than yours, and, in fact, it is stated in the Holy Qur'an that to kill one innocent person is like killing all of mankind.

The Muslims of today should realize that the greatest Jihad in Islam is that which leads to peace, because Islam's literal meaning is peace. How can one claim to associate themselves with the religion of peace if people continuously try to create friction and take up any opportunity to declare Jihad and raise slogans against another person or place? To those who think that Islam ever resorted to force to spread its message, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community writes: "The religion that can easily establish its truth and superiority by sound intellectual arguments, heavenly signs or other reliable testimony, does not need the sword to threaten men and force a confession of its truth from them."

Islam never had any use for physical force in spreading its message. In fact, it was in Muslim lands that people of other religions escaped in refuge from persecution. History bears witness to the fact that no sword fell upon the hearts of the Chinese that caused some of their provinces to become totally Muslim. There was no coercion used against the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia, to pledge itself to One God.

All of these countries are giving lie to the accusation that Islam was spread by force and the truth is that there was no compulsion in the spread of Islam, except the heart of the Holy Prophet which compelled all hearts and flooded them with love and regard for him. Why such love? As Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) explains concerning the Holy Prophet: "He is not God, but through him we have seen God. His religion which has come to us is a mirror of Divine Powers. Had it not been for Islam, it would have been difficult in this age to appreciate what Prophethood is and whether miracles are possible and whether they are part of the law of nature."

This is the Jihad that is demanded of Muslims today — the Jihad of putting forth the true character of the Holy Prophet, not only in word but in character. I hope that the misgivings and misunderstandings concerning Islam are put to rest, and that those who have questions about Islam will not hesitate to address those questions to us. We are more than willing to answer each and every question that anyone has about Islam or about anything that I have written.

Kalamazoo Gazette
November 12, 2006

"Reason, rationality, not violence, draws people to Islam"

Ayesha Mangla and Shazia Sohail

Media frenzy over the provocative papal remarks about Islam had considerably died down until Diether Haenicke's Oct. 18 column, "Papal courage or clumsiness," appeared. One does not know whether to chide the pope or Haenicke for their lack of knowledge of Islam, or to reprimand Muslims for proving them correct with their inordinate reaction.

Haenicke's assertion "that the Muslim faith was originally established through war and conquest" is absolutely false. This misconception is based on medieval orientalists' views that require clarification.

About the myth that Islam spread by sword, religious scholar Karen Armstrong wrote in *The Guardian* on Sept. 18, "With disturbing regularity, this medieval conviction surfaces every time there is trouble in the Middle East. Yet until the 20th century, Islam was a far more tolerant and peaceful faith than Christianity. The Qur'an strictly forbids any coercion in religion and regards all rightly guided religion as coming from God; and despite the western belief to the contrary, Muslims did not impose their faith by the sword. . . . But the old myth of Islam as a chronically violent faith persists, and surfaces at the most inappropriate moments."

In the same article she also notes, "Jesus had told his followers to love their enemies, not to exterminate them. It was when the Christians of Europe were fighting brutal holy wars against Muslims in the Middle East that Islam first became known in the West as the religion of the sword . . . at a time when European social order was deeply hierarchical, despite the egalitarian message of the Gospel, Islam was condemned for giving too much respect to women and other menials."

There are no incidents from Prophet Muhammad's life that condoned force for conversion. In fact, once when a follower bragged about killing a non-believer because he thought he was only pretending to accept Islam to save his own life, Prophet Muhammad turned red in the face and exclaimed three times, "How could you have possibly made that assessment to kill him? Did you open his heart to see if he really accepted Islam? How could you kill him? How could you kill him? How could you kill him?"

The pope and Haenicke fail to differentiate between the true teachings of Islam and some of its followers' un-Islamic behavior. One cannot blame Islam for the death penalty to an Afghan for apostasy or for forbidding Christians to proselytize or posses a Bible in Arab countries, because these actions are firmly against Quranic teachings. How can a Bible be forbidden from Arab lands when a Muslim's faith is incomplete without belief in all the revealed books? To believe in all the revealed books is one of the five pillars of Islam.



Or how can a Catholic cathedral not be allowed in Saudi Arabia when the Qur'an admonishes us to protect all houses of worship? Non-Muslim scholar Dr. D.W. Leitz, in rebutting this false charge of violent jihad based his argument on the Qur'an itself and said, "All these arguments, advanced to prove that the purpose of jihad was to spread Islam by force, are contradicted by the Qur'an. The Qur'an says that the purpose of jihad is to protect mosques, churches, synagogues and cloisters." (22:41).

Therefore, if some Arab nations or Muslim leaders are not following the true Islamic teachings, one cannot blame Islam or Prophet Muhammad. Similarly, it would be foolish to blame Jesus Christ for all the horrifying atrocities committed by his followers during the Crusades or the Spanish Inquisition.

By ignoring Quranic teachings and verses like, "Invite to the path of thy Lord with wisdom and comely admonishment and dispute with them in the best of manners," (16:126) and "There is no compulsion in religion," (2:257) Muslims seem to have invited the punishment promised by the Qur'an, "Say, 'He has power to send punishment upon you from above you or from beneath your feet, or to confound you by splitting you into sects and make you taste the violence of one another.'" (6:66).

By destroying churches and burning effigies of the pope and issuing death sentences, Muslim fanatics once again have proved their own idiocy. They have evaded their responsibility of refuting the allegations leveled against Prophet Mohammad, who won hearts and minds with nothing but supreme courtesy and high morals. This would have been the time to correct the pope that the verse, "There is no compulsion in religion" was not revealed during the early period of Islam's powerlessness, as he suggested, but in Medina, a place where Muslims were not only free from Meccan persecution, but also when the prophet was chief of the city and held power.

This was also an opportunity to remind the pope that while persecution in the name of religion is the repetitive theme in the history of human aggression, with the Catholic church being no exception, freedom of conscience is the Qur'an's repetitive theme. Prophet Muhammad was asked again and again to proclaim, "This is the truth from your Lord; let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve." (18:30). And, "Remind them, for thou art an admonisher. Thou hast no authority to compel them." (88:22-3). The Qur'an clearly states, "If thy Lord had enforced His will, surely all those on earth would have believed, without exception. Will thou, then, force men to become believers?" (10:100). So how could

Prophet Muhammad force anyone to accept Islam irrationally and condone something that the Qur'an rejected? People are drawn toward the truth of Islam because of its inherent beauty and reason and rationality. In fact, not a single incident can be cited from the prophet's life of condoning force for conversion.

When the prophet married Khadija, she offered him all her slaves and assets. Prophet Muhammad freed all of them and distributed her assets among the poor. One young slave named Zaid refused to leave the prophet's company, even when his parents came to fetch him, because he was so impressed with his conduct and compassionate love for him. Zaid said, "I love the prophet more than my parents." Hearing this, the prophet adopted him as his son.

Once, when a funeral procession went by, the Prophet Muhammad stood up as a mark of respect. He was told that it was the funeral of a Jewish man. The prophet replied, "Was he not a human being?" This is how Prophet Muhammad established religious tolerance and mutual respect among various faiths and created an atmosphere of love and peace, unlike today's fanatics.

Instead of having a violent reaction to these false allegations, Muslims need to first regain pride in their true history, which has been summed up accurately by religious scholar Thomas Arnold's observation that, "Islam has gained its greatest and most lasting missionary triumphs in times and places in which its political power has been weakest." The areas of largest Muslim population, i.e. Malaysia, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, never had a Muslim conqueror. The increase in their Muslim population was because of peaceful conversion by traveling mystics, roving missionaries, and the imams of the village mosques.

It is true that "if the balance between reason and faith is not solidly established, then our world will fall into the hands of political and religious fanatics." There is no faith that invokes reason more than Islam. There are about 750 verses of the Quran that urge the believers to ponder over the nature of things and use reason and rationality to attain truth. Islam clearly asserts that there is no contradiction between the word of God and the work or act of God (nature and science): "And He pressed into service for you the night and the day and the sun and the moon; and the stars too have been pressed into service by His command. Surely, in that are Signs for a people who make use of their reason." (16:13).

Members of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have no qualms about accepting the pope's "invitation to frank and sincere dialogue, with great mutual respect," his professed intention, since they have engaged in such dialogue for more than 100 years and won hearts and minds with love and sound intellectual arguments according to their motto, "Love for all, hatred for none." It has enabled them to deliver the message in 24:55, "And if you obey him (Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him), you will be rightly guided. And the Messenger is only responsible for the plain delivery of the Message." His Holiness Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the fourth successor of the founder of Ahmadiyyat noted, "Swords can win territories, but not hearts. Force can bend heads, but not minds."

The pope's statement that the wise do not need force, power or weapons was observed by His Holiness Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, more than a 100 years ago. He said, "The religion that can easily establish its truth and superiority by sound intellectual arguments, heavenly signs or other reliable testimony, does not need the sword to threaten men and force a confession of its truth from them."

Members of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community have no qualms about accepting the pope's "invitation to frank and sincere dialogue, with great mutual respect," his professed intention, since they have engaged in such dialogue for more than 100 years and won hearts and minds with love and sound intellectual arguments according to their motto, "Love for all, hatred for none." It has enabled them to deliver the message in 24:55, "And if you obey him (Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him), you will be rightly guided. And the Messenger is only responsible for the plain delivery of the Message." His Holiness Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the fourth successor of the founder of Ahmadiyyat noted, "Swords can win territories, but not hearts. Force can bend heads, but not minds."

Anyone who believes in this myth that Islam spread through force is recommended to read *Life of Muhammad* by His Holiness Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad or *Murder in the Name of Allah* and *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth* by His Holiness Mirza Tahir Ahmad. These books can be read or purchased at www.alislam.org/books/.

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From the Archives:
"Assalam-o-Alaikum"

By Qazi Muhammad Barkatullah



Peace and Allah's mercy and His blessings be on you. These are the words of greetings of one Muslim to another. The Americans have different ways of greetings. As a rule, the greeting is according to time; for example, "good morning," "good evening," etc. Once the writer, while a student, stayed in a dormitory. One fine morning, while passing by, the writer greeted the student saying, "good morning." But to the surprise of the writer, the other student said/"what is so good about this morning?" The writer thus discovered that normally people hesitate to utter the word "good" and confine to saying "morning" and "evening," etc. These words, therefore, cannot stand for greetings, because, morning, evening, are like other mornings and evenings.

The Americans do say "Hello" sometimes. But in a cheerful mood they exclaim "Hi". These are pathetic words in Urdu language. Having reached America, the writer could not understand why the Americans who apparently seem to be happy, utter "Hi", as if they were in some kind of pain!

Do the Christians, then have, a mode of greeting? They may say "Hello, Hi, morning," etc, but these are, as such, devoid of any spiritual significance.

The Muslims, on the other hand, shower blessings of Almighty on one another, One says, Assalamo Alaikum – peace be on you, The other responds, Wa Alaikum us Salam – peace be on you too.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, has exhorted that the Muslims should begin their conversation with Assalamo Alaikum – peace be on you. There is no specific time that these words should be uttered. These greetings can be exchanged anytime, anyplace, whenever and wherever Muslims meet each other.

Say, someone is going out of home, he or she will say, Assalamo Alaikum. Similarly, when one is returning home, one will say, Assalamo Alaikum. No matter how many times a person leaves home and returns, he or she utters these words and in return, hears Wa Alaikum us Salam, which invokes peace and blessings on him or her too. It is equally a good practice to say Assalamo Alaikum while going to bed and saying Assalamo Alaikum while seeing each other in the morning. The idea is that one should get used to invoking blessings of the Almighty upon members of the family also.

If someone goes to someone else's home, she or he must first say Assalamo Alaikum and then seek permission to enter the house. If some one does not like to express Assalamo Alaikum greetings on the threshold, he or she should not be given permission to enter the house. Once, someone came to the door of the Holy Prophet and wanted to come in. The Holy Prophet asked someone to tell that person the proper way to seek such permission. Then the person first said Assalamo Alaikum and sought permission. When the Holy Prophet came to someone's door, he wouldn't stay straight in the door, so that he shouldn't be peeping in but stand on the side. Then, he would say Assalamo Alaikum and the occupants knew about his presence.

The Holy Prophet has said that saying more and more Assslamo Alaikum will increase the bonds of affection among mankind. He has, therefore, asked his followers to spread the greetings of Assalamo Alaikum among themselves. Every Muslim, therefore greets the other person with the words Assalamo Alaikum, people should know each other. Rather, the greetings can be extended to even those who are not known before. Once the Holy Prophet passed by a group of people where there were both believers and non-believers and the Holy Prophet said, Assalamo Alaikum.

It is also recorded that the Muslim brothers and sisters should not stay on non-speaking terms with one another, for some more than three days. The Holy Prophet has said that the better of the two will be the one who is first to say Assalamo Alaikum to the other.

It is a matter of rule that the junior should be first to say Assalamo Alaikum to the senior. One who is riding should say Assalamo Alaikum to the one who is walking. One who is walking, should say Assalamo Alaikum to the one who is sitting. A small gathering should be first to say Assalamo Alaikum to large gathering. If, one person, from a gathering, says Assalamo Alaikum, it will

It is obligatory on every Muslim to say Assslamo Alaikum to another Muslim and it is equally obligatory on every Muslim to respond to the greetings. It is also accorded that nearest to God are those who are first to say Assalamo Alaikum.

be sufficient to be considered as group representation. As, such, one person saying Wa Alaikum us Salam, will be considered to represent the whole group. Anyone who is coming to joins gathering should be the first to say Assalamo Alaikum. Anyone who wishes to catch attention should say Assalamo Alaikum. On the telephone, it is a good practice to start the conversation with Assalamo Alaikum.

Instead of saying Hello, Hello, on the phone, it is good to say Assalamo Alaikum to get the attention of the other party.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad[sa], once passed by a group of youths, and was the first to say Assalamo Alaikum. Similarly, it is reported that while passing by ladies, he would say Assalamo Alaikum. Once the Holy Prophet was sitting among others, someone came and said Assalamo Alaikum. The Holy Prophet responded and some one heard the Holy Prophet uttering the number ten. Then, another person came to join the company and said Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmat Ullah […and His mercy]. The Holy Prophet responded and then said "twenty." Afterwards, another person came to join the company and said Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmat Ullah Wa Barakata-hu […and His blessings], The Holy Prophet responded and said "thirty." It is said that these numbers referred to the blessings the person would receive, on the principle that a good deed gets a tenfold reward.

Generally speaking, if someone says Assalamo Alaikum (peace be on you), the response is: Wa Alaikum Assalam (peace be on you too), if someone says Assalamo Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah (peace and Allah's mercy be on you}, the response is Wa Alaikum Assalam We Rahmatullah (peace and Allah's mercy be on you too). Similarly, if some one says Assalamo Alaikurn Wa Rahmatullahe Wa Barakatohu (peace end Allah's mercy and His blessings be on you), the response is, Wa Alaikum Assalam Wa Rahmatullahe Wa Barakatohu (peace and Allah's mercy and His blessings be on you too).

It is obligatory on every Muslim to say Assslamo Alaikum to another Muslim and it is equally obligatory on every Muslim to respond to the greetings. It is also accorded that nearest to God are those who are first to say Assalamo Alaikum. The companions of the Promised Messiah always took the lead in saying Assalamo Alaikum whenever they met. It is reported that Hadhrat Maulwi Sher Ali, for instance, would call Assalamo Alaikum to others as soon as he reached within hearing distance to them; thus he never allowed to slip by any opportunity of earning the promised blessings.

The Companions of the Holy Prophet were very keen to say Assalamo Alaikum and Wa Alaikum Assalam. In case they were going together on a journey one of them got separated from others for a short while, he would say Assalamo Alaikum on rejoining.

The Muslims are a people who love peace. So if someone quartets and disputes with them, they avoid the unpleasantness by saying peace end leaving the scene. The Holy Prophet once said, "Should I tell you one thing that you would start loving each other? Make it your habit to say Assalamo Alaikum frequently among yourselves,"

Once the Companions wanted to know one good deed in Islam. It is recorded that the Holy Prophet told them to say Assalamo Aiaikum frequently.

It is said about the Promised Messiah that he would affectionately look at a person who said Assalamo Alaikum or responded to this greeting. It is also known that The Promised Messiah would invariably write Assalamo Alaikum while writing any letter. Once the Promised Messiah asked some of his followers sitting together, to trace certain references. They got to work, and began sending him the references on small slips of paper, beginning with Assalamo Alaikum, One of them forgot to write this greeting on one of his slips of paper. The Promised Messiah reminded the person that he should not have forgotten to write Assalamo Alaikum, no matter how numerous these slips became. The Promised Messiah said that no matter how frequently and how often you meet and address someone, you must say or write Assalamo Alaikum.

It is recorded that the Promised Messiah fell sick and more than once he received the revelation 'Assalamo Alaikum' and he recovered soon afterwards. *Tadhkirah* [collection of Promised Messiah's revelations, dreams, etc.] records several revelations of the Promised Messiah which say 'Assalamo Alaikum', The Promised Messiah has quoted verses by some poet which may be rendered into English as: It is good that I am humble. In that I say Salam to everyone; If I were haughty and proud, I would have not reached Lord God.

It is also refreshing to know that Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih III, while on European tour, dispatched several times a gift to the Community, and his gift was Assalamo Alaikum.

The Muslims, according to the Holy Qur'an, also believe that *Peace, Peace* will be the words heard in paradise. Islam is, therefore, the religion through which one can find peace, not only in this world, but also in the Hereafter, The Muslims, therefore, should make it a habit to frequently exchange the greetings of Assalamo Alaikum.

Peace and Allah's mercy and His blessings be on you.

Muslim Sunrise
1974•Issue 1

Dr. Qazi Barkatullah (1931-2006) obtained his B.A., B.Ed., and M.O.L (Master of Oriental Learning) degrees from the Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan. He came to the United States and earned his M.S. and Ph. D. degrees from Indiana University, Bloomington, and taught for 27 years in the Education Department at Jackson University, TN. He wrote of several books including Introduction to Educational Measurement and Evaluation (1971), Islam, the Religion of Mankind (1972), Jesus Son of Mary (1973), Education During Middle Ages Under the Muslims (1974), and The Lady Mary (1975). He was a member of the editorial board of The Review of Religions in 1984-1985. He passed away on October 4, 2006.



Swami Sharanananda Acharya

of Chinmaya Mission, Chicago's 'Badri

Swami Sharanananda hails from Jagannath Dham (Puri) in Orissa, India. Inspired by Pujya Swami Chinmayananda, he joined the two-year brahmachari Vedanta course in Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai, and received brahmachari diksha in 1988. He served at different CM centers in India, and has been the resident acharya of CM Chicago, Badri since March 1993. On July 9, 1995, he was initiated into sannyasa by Pujya Swami Tejomayananda and given the monastic name 'Swami Sharanananda.' Swamiji conducts discourses on Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads, guided meditation and yoga classes for all age groups.

What is the soul, and what does the Vedas teach about it?

In English what we call "Soul" is called *Atman* and *Brahman* in Sanskrit. Soul means our True Nature or essential nature which does not change. What changes is not our true identity. *Brahman* and *Atman* are one and the same changeless (Eternal) Reality which is our True Self. We also call it the God-Principle, the Truth, the Eternal Principle — and it is One and the Only One! That alone is! The world is an illusion; it is not real. Names and forms and their differences are the figments of the mind. Though we perceive the world through the sense organs, they are not there. For example- we see blueness in the sky through our eyes which is not really there. The Truth that we call *Brahman* is eternal, is One, is free from birth and death, it has no qualities, and it is the very subject. It is not an object! It is not the object of mind; it is not the object of the intellect, it is not the object of sense organs. This Truth is beyond body, mind and intellect.

How about the human soul? When a child is born, does the soul enter its body from outside?

Soul (*Atman*) is everywhere. It is all pervading. It does not come and go anywhere. The one which enters the body and leaves is called the *Jiva* (transmigrating self or ego). It is different from *Atman*. *Atman* is the Life Principle — it is the same in everyone. It is like one gas present in different cars.

But *Jiva* (ego/experiencing self) is different in each individual. *Jiva* in each one of us is that which experiences joy and sorrow, feeling being in trouble or having good time. *Jiva* experiences problems not because of the experiences but because of ownership. It takes ownership of what does not belong to it and what it has not created. *Jiva* takes ownership of the body although it has not created it! It says: It is my body, my hands, my face, my hair, my name, my respect! Also it owns external things. For example, there is some land, and it is not created by *Jiva*, but if it gets the land, ego becomes happy thinking that it owns it. If someone takes away that land, then it

is unhappy. If somebody gives a job, ego tries to own it and calls it "my job". When the job is taken away, ego blames the giver of the job by telling others that he took away "my job" — which is only a false accusation.

This *Jiva* in order to fulfill its unfulfilled desires enters into the child's body when the body is in the form of fetus. It enters into the body from the astral plane.

Is the Jiva real?

The *Jiva* is not really real. It is unreal as it has no real existence! The only reality is the Atman, the Life-Principle! *Jiva* is the shadow of the Atman. When the sun comes up, a shadow of a tree is created. The shadow may look like a tree, but actually it does not exist on its own. The *Jiva* is like an image which is seen when one stands in front of a mirror. Though it appears somebody is inside the mirror, actually it is only an illusion. The image in the mirror looks like the person. It does all actions but it is not real.

If Jiva is not real, then how is it that it feels sorrow and happiness?

Actually our feelings and sensations are not true, not real! One can feel in the dreams also. One may become a millionaire in a dream and be very happy about it, but on waking up, one is the same homeless person who has nothing.

At what time is this Jiva connected with the body: before the birth, after the birth, or during the body's growth in the womb?

It is told that (I don't remember the exact time) during the third or the forth month of conception, *Jiva* enters the body. Actually *Jiva* selects the body. Therefore, after three or four months of pregnancy, the fetus should not be aborted.

How does Jiva select a body?

It is like we select a house! Suppose I want to enjoy certain kinds of things, I want to have waterfront, or want to see the trees, then I would select the house that can give me what I want. In the same way *Jiva* has desires and it wants to fulfill those desires. So, it will select the parents, it will select the body, and it will select the surroundings where it can fulfill its remaining desires. But all the desires cannot be fulfilled during the stay in one body. So it will stay in that body as long as there is the possibility of fulfilling some of those desires. After that it will discard the body and will go to another body.



So Hindus believe in reincarnation at the same time they don't consider it as an absolute one. When one realizes one True Self which is free from birth and death, theory of re-incarnation becomes null and void. So theory of reincarnation is only for the *Jiva* not for the Soul (Atman).

What happens to Jiva when the body is dead?

Death means the separation of the Subtle body (including mind, intellect, memory and ego) from the gross body. Then it goes to astral plane, and stays there till it sees a favorable condition to enter into another form. This transmigration of *Jiva* is called re-incarnation.

Is transmigration of Jiva real? Is the theory of re-incarnation an absolute one?

Transmigration is not real. It is real as long as we consider our self as the body and the creation (birth and death) as real. So Hindus believe in reincarnation at the same time they don't consider it as an absolute one. When one realizes one True Self which is free from birth and death, theory of re-incarnation becomes null and void. So theory of reincarnation is only for the *Jiva* not for the Soul (Atman).

Can you please expound upon this a bit more?

It is just a theory to explain the inequality in nature. Suppose two children are born from the same parents, but one is bright and the other is dull. One is very noble, and the other is very bad. We know a child who is only two and half years old, but he can play "tabla" as efficiently as a master player. But parents did not teach him. So, it shows that he must have known how to play it is the past life. So, we believe that children do bring qualities from the past. Whatever good or bad we do in this life is carried to the next life. There is no escape from the results of the bad actions nor is wastage of good actions. The favorable or difficult situations we face in this life entirely because of the past actions done in the previous birth or in this birth. If *Jiva* has done all good actions in this life but still facing difficulties, then the cause for the difficulties are the actions done in the past births.

But is there any final escape for Jiva?

Yes. Once *Jiva* realizes it's True and Eternal nature the cycle of birth and death comes to an end. One will discover permanent happiness and unconditional love with in. One will see Divine every where. The division of caste, creed, religion, color, gender, nationality will disappear. One will love others as one loves oneself. This is the purpose of human life and one will accomplish this mission.

This Jiva is, as you said, in some who are good and some who are bad. Are those good and bad rewarded and punished in any way?

The *Jiva* will not be punished by someone else, but punished by its own actions. God is impartial. He does not reward the good nor punish the bad. But *Jiva* is rewarded by its good actions and punished by the bad actions. Suppose we put our finger in the fire, God will not punish us, but we will be punished by our own silly act. If we are suffering mentally that means we are maintaining ugly thoughts. If we have not done anything wrong, and someone comes and troubles us, then we ask why we are being punished. Actually, we must have done something wrong in the past, that is why we are being troubled. Every action has equal and opposite reaction. The difficulties or obstacles which come on their own are really opportunities for *Jiva* to grow. Difficulties are purifying processes. Gold shines more when it passes through fire and is polished. When gold is put in the fire, it may look as if the gold is being punished, but actually it is being cleansed off its impurities. Difficulty in life cleanses us, removes the angularities and makes us a whole, integrated and holy person. But the person who is devoted to Lord can understand that! Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future!

We know that the world population is increasing each day. The number of births is greater than the number of deaths. Are there more Jivas in the waiting than those that have left the bodies of the dead and await return in new born babies? Are there too many Jivas already existing?

In the nature there is no addition or subtraction; everything is constant. The number of *Jivas* is always fixed. But all the *jivas* will not take birth at one time. *Jiva* is the potential life-form. It is like the seeds. Suppose there are 100 seeds lying on the earth. All the seeds will not germinate and become plants at the same time. But the maximum probability of the seeds to become trees is fixed. It will never exceed 100. *Jivas* are not only in the human beings; they are in the animals, insects, worms and bacteria also. So, there remains a balance. There is no increase or decrease. The total number *Jivas* are fixed. Another way to understand this is to think of an ocean. One day there may be two thousand waves in it, the other day there may be only one hundred. But actually how many waves can rise in ocean is always fixed and there cannot be more than that number. The maximum number always remains the same!



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What is the difference between Jivas of animals and the human Jivas?

In case of animals, *Jivas* always go higher up in the evolutionary ladder; but in case of humans they can go up or come down. From man, one can go to animal state or can go up to the God state; but from animal state one cannot go further down.

How about plants? Do they have Jivas?

Yes, plants have *Jivas*, but they are always progressive. They do not go down; they always evolve. From plant life *Jiva* will go to animal state, then human and at last merge with *Brahman*.

So, the human Jivas can go into the plant state?

Yes. When one is utterly selfish and leads a life of inertia, he or she will become like a plant in next life.

What happens when animals, including human beings, eat the other animals?

Suppose a tiger kills a deer, the tiger is not committing any sin. The tiger has to use the flesh of other animal to

sustain its life and that of the offspring. The tiger will never eat grass even if its life is at stake. Animals kill other animals only to satisfy their hunger. But human beings not only kill to eat but aggrandize to satisfy their greed. Mahatma Gandhi has told, "There is enough in this world to fulfill every body's need but there is not enough even to satisfy one person's greed." In the nature deer are not afraid of the tiger and they stay in the same forest. Once the tiger has eaten one deer, they stay around knowing that the tiger is already satisfied and will not eat more. But human beings may eat two potatoes, but they will amass hundred pounds of potatoes for their future use. In humans, there is such greed, but in animals no such greed is there. Unless humans follow the nature, they are worse than animals. Sins are only in case of human beings, not in animals. Eating meat is not sinful if it is needed for human survival; but eating even the vegetables out of greed is sinful.

You said that Jivas can get connected with Brahman. What happens when that connection is made?

Then it becomes one with *Brahman*, and that means that its journey will come to an end. It is Home coming. All the wanderings will come to an end. One will attain Eternal Bliss. The game of life is over. There after one will love and serve every body not for fulfillment but out of fulfillment.

Is it absorbed in Brahman and disappears, or its existence is still there within Brahman?

Once we realize that our true nature is *Brahman*, then though the body is there for us to see it, but we are not the body anymore. We become one with *Brahman*. There will be no separate identity apart from *Brahman*. One might be seeing a tree, but actually it is ONE GOD. The *Jiva* connected with God sees God in everything. After that there is nothing left for *Jiva* to achieve. So there is no coming back to the cycle of creation.

Is there a creative process for Jivas, or they just exist by themselves since eternity?

There are two things: When you are talking of creation, at that time we talk of karma, we talk of body, we talk of differences, and we talk of reincarnation. But when we are talking from the stand point of the Supreme, then the creation is not there In Hinduism, there are two theories for creation: One is called modification, the other is called manifestation. Modification is like making yogurt from the milk. Milk is the cause, yogurt is the effect. Once the cause becomes the effect, then we cannot change the effect back to the cause. In modification, the nature of the effect is completely different from the nature of the cause as it is evident in the difference between milk and yogurt. But in case of manifestation, cause without undergoing any change appears as something completely different. The example is that of a rope appearing as a snake. In the darkness of night we do not see the rope as a rope, but we see it as a snake. But the snake is non-existing. Similarly, we see a ghost on a post, or blueness in the sky. This kind of creation is manifestation. When we talk about this creation which is changing all the time, which is made of differences, in which there is lot of pain and suffering; but actually God is appearing in many forms without undergoing any change! That's why we call the creation as the manifestation of the Lord, the *Brahman*. *Jiva* is non other than *Brahman* in its true nature.

Now these Jivas, are they manifested or are they modifications?

They are manifested, they are not modifications.

If all the Jivas are manifestations of God, then what makes them different from each other? Some are good and some are bad.

The difference is only in appearance. In reality there is no difference. We are the different manifestations of the same Lord. Appearance is only for the sense organs and mind. Mind is like a prism. When a ray of light passes through a prism apparently seven different colors are formed. But these colors merge back to the Sunlight when the prism is removed. In the same way when the One Divine light in us expresses itself through the prism of mind, apparently different forms are created. But these differences are illusory. So Ignorance creates divisions but understanding of our true Self removes the differences. When we do not understand the one All-pervading Reality, we give importance to the creation of mind and sense organs which create the illusory divisions.

Finally, if you have to give a message to the readers of the Muslim Sunrise about Atman and Jiva, what would you like to say in conclusion?

The main thing is that all religions lead to the same destination. Religions are eternal laws of life. By following those laws we can reach the supreme Lord. Religions are propagated by great saints, by great prophets, great mahatmas, and great seers. We are not really the creators of religion. Religion is created by God. Divine principles and Divine Law are not created by any human being. But there are so many prophets or messengers they have realized that Truth by following the religious principles and they have shown us the path to Divinity. So we should give importance to the Divine. We should not get caught in differences in the paths but should aim at the same Divine destination. One should not get caught up with how people look, and how they behave. We should always concentrate on God, God is One! We should love everybody equally. We should not hate any one.◆

The Christmas Blues

By Falahud Din Shams



Christmas is beautiful. To tell you the truth, even I have prayed some years that we get a white Christmas. All my Christian friends wanted one. I think the **red and green combination** of Christmas dresses looks much better with the white snowy background. I can say this without knowing anything about fashion. My fashion know-how is never going to improve because **my wife won't let me go shopping...even for my own pajamas.**

I **have spent** about 40 Christmas seasons in Chicago. The city puts in a lot of effort in decorating the trees and downtown streets. The Marshall Fields store is another tourist spot during the Christmas season.

The old timers think that downtown used to be prettier and much more fun in the old days. They think *everything* was better in the old days. Maybe it's because of their eyesight that the lights just don't appear the way they used to. Maybe it's their memory. A lot of things happen with old age.

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I couldn't bear the desperation on the faces of my friends. After all, they were not asking for a miracle like snow in the Sahara desert. It snows in Chicago every year without fail. All they were asking God for was to move up the schedule a little. For the happy faces of 3 million people in Chicago, I figured, so what if we non-Christians suffer a little? After all, we get two days off and we don't even have to go to church.

Yet my suffering would not be limited to shoveling snow earlier in the season. I also feel sorry for so many people who believe in the story related to the Christmas season. Maybe they just want to believe it. Fantasy is always more fun and more beautiful than reality.

The movie industry makes billions on that concept.

I mean, to believe that Jesus[as] was born in December is essentially to ensure there were *shepherds grazing their sheep*. Mind you, in the winter the grass does not grow on those hills. The shepherds like to stay inside – and so do the sheep. Then the



three wise men show up. Shortly after, the star comes down on top of the barn where Jesus[as] is born. For a people who have scientific, geographic and atmospheric knowledge, it is a testament to their blind faith.

How else could you tell a story like that with a straight face? After this scene, the story kind of disappears. All you hear is hallelujah, hallelujah, (peace on earth, peace on earth) and the Christmas music starts. I wouldn't want to join the "peace marching" of Christians at this point in time. Starting from the Crusades, the Spanish inquisition, Vietnam and now Iraq, the "peace march" is still on. Just the mention of this long historical peace march is enough to ruin the Christmas spirit.

My suffering continues with the concept of Santa Claus. Being raised in a Muslim country, I knew nothing about Santa Claus. As a matter of fact, I don't think he exists *anywhere* in the Southern Hemisphere or the hot climate countries. I mean to wear what he does and slide down chimneys in areas around the equator would be a serious undertaking.

I looked up "Santa Claus" in the encyclopedia to satisfy my curiosity. I couldn't believe what I found out. His origin is Saint Nicholas from Izmir, Turkey. The details of his travels and the North Pole house continued to be made up as children kept on asking questions about who he was. You've got to look up the details in the encyclopedia – I apologize; this was before we had the Internet.

You have to look it up on the Internet. I think you type in the word Santa Claus and you get options to learn about his history. Even the old timers know how to find information faster these days.

The cold hard fact is that the 25th of December is when the sun worshipping pagans used to celebrate the coming of the sun. The sun starts its movement towards the north during that week. The celebration is called Saturnalia. So at some time, the Christians figured they would join in on the dancing, music, food and fun and do it in the name of Jesus[as]. I found that out in the encyclopedia as well, but this was under the word "Christmas".

Many Christians have Christmas blues also. The number of gifts they have to give to family members and friends is enough to turn anyone blue, and this is after they have agreed to keep gifts to a $25 minimum. They can't escape it.

The Holy Qur'an has referred to it as the chains around their necks and ankles. People strap themselves with this sort of custom and find no way out. Some of my friends even say that they hate Christmas for this reason alone.

The Jehovah's Witnesses hate Christmas too but they have different reasons altogether. This is not a joke. Don't ever say "Merry Christmas" to a Jehovah's Witness unless you want to lose him as a friend. We don't need to take sides. Just be careful so we don't get caught in the middle.

While I was at the Chicago public library looking up these words, I decided to look under the word "Jesus" also. That opened up a whole new set of shockers for me. Encyclopedia Britannica said that there was no authentic history about Jesus[as]. So I looked up other encyclopedias like Standard, Americana and Collier's. They had the same opinion. Now I knew why the Christians were sticking to their story. How can anyone challenge their story, the real stuff is missing. Logic, of course, is something they don't want to mix with their faith. It could take away their Christmas holidays.

I think their belief in Jesus[as] being the Son of God is due to the same reason. The story just kept on getting bigger with time and before you know it, resemblance to reality disappeared. Making equals to God is sin. The first commandment should be sufficient to clarify that. "Thou shall have no other gods before Me."

To hate a sin is a virtue but we must not hate the sinner. This is truly a great principle and we should understand it. It also fits in with our motto of 'Love for all, hatred for none.'

When your mother saw you as a child coming home full of mud and filth, she did not hate you. She hated the mud and the filth but not you. She just wanted to clean you up. We should hate the sin of a human being, but not the ones committing the sin. We need to help them clean themselves of that sin.

So let us not ruin Christmas by hating the Christians. We should share their happiness with them. We don't have to celebrate with them by drinking with them and going to their churches. Giving them a gift at their time of happiness and praying for them is not something we should be hesitant about. We should pray for their health, prosperity, well being and especially for freedom from their bondage of sin.

We can give them the real thing by introducing them to the real God. But, how are we going to deliver it if we can't even get close to them. Christmas season will be over in a few weeks but our relationships could last for the rest of the year.

I have told all my Christian friends I am open to receiving gifts at Christmas. I quote them the famous words of the Salvation Army bell ringers:

It is better to give, than to receive.



So let us not ruin Christmas by hating the Christians. We should share their happiness with them. We don't have to celebrate with them by drinking with them and going to their churches. Giving them a gift at their time of happiness and praying for them is not something we should be hesitant about. We should pray for their health, prosperity, well being and especially for freedom from their bondage of sin.



Bismillah-hir-Rahman-nir-Raheem
In the name of God, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful

We wish you, your Family, and Loved Ones peace and blessings this Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year

Muslim Sunrise Staff
Falahud Din Shams, Editor

Love For All. Hatred For None.



The Muslim Sunrise

The Muslim Sunrise is published by the
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA
2S 510 Rte. 53 Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

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